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Casting Nets and Framing Films
An Ethnography of Networks of Cultural Production in Beirut

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I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where states otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own

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Abstract

Filmmakers first received widespread academic attention as case studies into the increasing casualisation of labour in post-industrial economies. Their precarious existence in project-based labour markets provided much food for thought about the future of work, while their status as artists and producers of culture entered them into debates around just what art is and how to approach it. But in light of recent transformations in the cultural industries and the accompanied blurring of boundaries between production and consumption, academic understandings of the lives filmmakers lead have also been somewhat blurred. This ethnography of networks of cultural production in Beirut re-introduces filmmakers into the very sociological debates that they helped spark. Might a return to the situated experience of these theoretically and methodologically challenging people, who form workgroups and collaborate with each other repeatedly across projects as they craft their own careers, shed productive light on academic understandings of precarity, cultural production and indeed our increasingly confusing relationships with the objects around us?

With that in mind, in this thesis I ask the following research question: how are networks of film production formed and maintained in Beirut? Based on an 'insider' ethnography of various film projects weaved into a mixed-methods social network analytic methodology, I adopt a relational sociological approach that conceives of production networks as akin to social worlds and find three analytic planes to delve deeper into: markets, objects and relationships.

In relation to markets, I echo the argument that current classification systems of cultural production are too consumption-based and adopt a social network markets framework more sensitised towards production. Here, I find that the cyclical, project-based relationship of patronage that ties production networks to their clients is highly varied and contingent, shaping not only the process of cultural production but also its organisational structure. Further, I argue that the management of these contingencies is key to the potential repeat collaboration not just with clients (and their own social networks), but fellow producers as well.

But past projects do not simply disappear once completed, they might well come back to haunt their makers. Drawing upon ethnographic and recent historical data on a number of web-series that emerged out of Beirut between 2009 and 2012, I compare using two-mode networks the past and more recent projects my interlocutors were involved in. Here, I find that one's past projects shape one's future by conducing or hindering their chances of finding new work. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, I find that filmmakers (and those around them) increasingly define themselves (and are defined by others) in relation to the past projects they have done.

Over time, though, as filmmakers collaborate on an increasing number of films, their relationships take on deeper characteristics than monochrome economic considerations. Here I draw upon the notion of embeddedness to shed light on emergent meaning at the network level across a number of projects and, therefore, the emergent social world-ness of networks. While the first set of findings relates to debates in the sociology of work and the second to those in the sociology of cultural production, my final analysis shows just how intimately the two are connected. I conclude by highlighting the potential of empirically-grounded relational sociological approaches to finessing our understandings of cultural work in its economic, social, but also material and technical contingencies.

Acknowledgments

Կուկ, ասի քեզի:
Պապ, ի՞նչ ըսեմ...

Our selves are indeed constituted through the multiple webs of relationships that we are embedded in. Towards those who constituted me as the writer of this thesis my gratitude and debt are indescribable. You 'constituted' this thesis, and I write your names below not just in gratitude (*that*, words completely fail to articulate, though maybe music wouldn't) rather in co-participation towards, and co-ownership of, this piece.

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When words failed Hello Psychaleppo's music didn't. So perhaps a fitting compromise to not being able to put more into this thesis would be to end the acknowledgments with a piece that accompanied the entirety of this dissertation: Celebration Blue.

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Introduction: Capturing Sociological Imaginations

During the summer of 2006, I was excited to start a job as a summer school facilitator. It would have paid me $500. Like everyone around me, from peers to parents and adults, I was optimistic and excited for the summer ahead. The political mood had somewhat stabilised after the events of the previous year, and the discourse was more about reigniting Beirut's tourism economy. But the first of four planned beach trips with the summer school was cut short an hour upon our arrival to the water park: 11:30 am. The so called 'July War' had begun, and from our position on top of the hill where the water park was I could see smoke. My mother fled to Dubai via Damascus, my father couldn't leave his job, and I chose to stay. For the rest of that summer I, like most people my age, spent mornings with internally displaced youths and afternoons at Greenpeace (or another organisation). I experienced every day the will of individuals to do good and the influence of complex structures around them on this will. (It is precisely this agency that is marketized and packaged into discourses of Beirut as the Phoenix that keeps rising from the ashes.) Whether it was the head of the Lebanese navy who explained to my local Greenpeace boss that we could not map the extent of the oil spill by sea because we were under a blockade, and later that he needed the help of civil society actors to clean up the oil spill (he did not have enough men), or the many school doormen I came across – mostly devout Christians – who welcomed and cared for their displaced political and religious rivals, I experienced agency and structure in interaction, and I decided to become a sociologist. Sociological imagination captured.

We could not afford the tuition fees of the American University of Beirut (AUB), so I chose the next best option to do good: social work – in the Lebanese sense of the term – particularly community work. And in my final year I interned at Beirut's local farmer's market, also an NGO, that later hired me to manage a project called Food n' Feast 2009. I was meant to organise a series of one-day traditional food festivals at eight different villages in collaboration with the host and neighbouring municipalities.

This was a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) funded peace building project, and the idea was that inviting neighbouring officials and food producers would help move past the civil war they were involved in a few decades ago. I was 21 years old at the time, and was struck by how well these old men at village municipalities cooperated with me, cyclically and repeatedly for eight different times in eight different villages. Howard Becker's (1984) conventions certainly come to mind here, but it was more how easily different peoples took up or 'slotted into' these conventions, cooperating whole-heartedly with a young city boy of at times questionable ability to express in Arabic (a stereotype of Armenians in Lebanon) that struck me most. Each festival would take about three weeks to organize, and as I got more and more acquainted with village locals I discovered that the people in my country weren't so different to each other after all. They made the same foods (with minor alterations), listened to the same tunes, and valued the same things.

My friends, meanwhile, were all in film. They were involved to varying degrees at the time with the production of a web-series that everyone in my university, and all other universities across the country, was obsessed with: Shankaboot (cf Saber and Webber, 2017). Fresh out of their own undergraduate studies, my friends were also struck by how well different crewmembers 'tapped into' the conventions of film production at Shankaboot. They would notice, for instance, a clear gendered division of filmmaking labour on music video sets: it would be mostly women doing the wardrobe and make-up, mostly men doing the camera and directing. At Shankaboot, these divisions weren't so clear. Shankaboot hired me as their 'community manager' after my graduation. I was responsible for disseminating their online content and maintaining their online presence, and what I felt towards bloggers through my work at the time, I later found out, Bourdieu (1998a) felt towards journalists - particularly his critique of television's lowering of entry barriers into ivory towers. As I worked my way into the on-set production of Shankaboot over its five seasons (I joined at the end of season two), I also discovered that people in this particular production 'tapped into' filmmaking conventions with extreme ease. Aside from us junior assistants, the crew was star-studded, full of people who were the best at what they did, so it should have been no surprise that they were able to tap into these conventions so easily. But still, there was more to it, a higher sense of collective purpose that they all had both on set and off it. This was, to an extent, similar to how local food producers would begin to truly cooperate only after establishing this same sense of common purpose with this

21-year-old kid from Beirut, a sense that we were on the same side. There was indeed much to compare and contrast between the two experiences. I only had to do one festival in each village, whereas the Shankaboot crew would meet every three to six months to shoot a new season; for each festival I had to work with the different producers, while in Shankaboot crewmembers would change from season to season, and sometimes even in the middle of production (cf Khodyakov, 2014). The fact that Shankaboot was a web-series meant that it did not have to abide by market-driven local television logics of plot and aesthetic (cf Bourdieu 1998a). The characters were all people that the public could identify with and relate to, from the delivery boy on his noisy moped to the migrant domestic worker exploited by her Lebanese bosses. The Arabic they spoke was very similar to the one we did, and very dissimilar to the more formal Arabic nobody spoke in real life but was the go-to language for TV series. This was more than just a web-series, and that influenced the way people worked on it. Sociological imagination captured, once more.

After Shankaboot came Beirut I Love You (BILY), and after BILY came Fasateen. After Fasateen I came to Edinburgh to pursue a postgraduate degree in Sociology. My dissertation was on this network of filmmakers. Meanwhile in Beirut, the senior crewmembers who had become our mentors moved on to other projects of varying success, and the junior crewmembers had started to "craft" (Jones, 1996, p. 63) their own careers towards seniority. But in my conversations with friends and mentors, I could still notice this sense of collectiveness and higher purpose even though there was no more Shankaboot, BILY or Fasateen. Their producers were now friends or acquaintances, and only occasionally colleagues on crews and projects nowhere near as inspiring as these web-series. Crossley (2010a, p. 5), drawing upon Becker (1984), likens networks to social worlds, "something broader than what the concept of 'network' might initially suggest." And so, this thesis is the result of my fascination with, and curiosity about, this greater sense of collectiveness, that which is precisely broader than what the concept of network might initially suggest. It is an attempt at gaining a better understanding of this social world-ness: how it comes to be, how it's maintained, and what it goes through. Specifically, in this thesis I ask: How are networks of film production in Beirut formed and maintained?

Context: The Lebanese Film Industry

Beirut has historically played a key role in regional circuits of cultural production. “The Adventures of Elias Mabrouk” was the first feature film to be shot in Lebanon in 1929, by the Italian Jordano Pidutti (Khatib 2008, p. 22), back when films were ‘movies’ long before they became ‘talkies’. It is said the Lebanese film industry lived its ‘golden age’ between 1929 and 1957, a period in which over 500 feature films (i.e. longer than 50 minutes) were produced were produced in the country (Harabi, 2009, p. 14; Melki, 2007, p. 524). While some argue that these figures are overly optimistic (see Shafik, 2016, pp. 9 - 47), it is clear that Lebanon has long competed with Egypt to be the primary supplier of films to the Arab World. Prior to the 15-year civil war that started with the explosion of a bus in April 1975, the popular Arab maxim, that Cairo writes, Beirut publishes, Baghdad reads” bore testament to the leading role Beirut and Lebanon played in circuits of Arab cultural production. Indeed, the more liberal and democratic (westernised) inclination of the Lebanese state in comparison to its neighbours was conducive to the city playing such a key cultural role, as was Beirut’s multi-cultural and diverse social fabric - Dakessian (2017), for instance, discusses the role Armenians, having arrived on Lebanese shores as refugees around the 1920s, played in the development of Lebanese theatre. In the early 1990s, after the end of the civil war, Lebanon became a pioneer in television, producing content for large Arab markets such as Saudi Arabia and the Arabian Gulf. While TV exports have since declined, partly due to Saudi investment in their own television industry and increasing instability in Lebanon (Melki 2007, pp. 529 - 530). Beirut still exports a significant amount of television, though; some of the projects I engage with in this dissertation were produced in Lebanon for a regional audience by partnered agglomerations of corporate media production houses (I engage most closely with these in chapter four). Furthermore, Lebanon remains one of the major exporters of ads in the Arab World despite the recent rise of Dubai as a behemoth of cultural production in the region. Melki (2007, p. 534) argues that Beirut offers the “best price / quality ratio” in advertising against its competitors: expensive Dubai and low-cost Cairo. There are over 51 advertising and production firms in Lebanon according to Melki (ibid), each

employing around 20 people on stable contracts and between 20 – 30 freelancers producing video of some form on any given day on average. While I cannot verify these figures, they still help to broadly frame our object of inquiry. Melki (2007, p. 496) also argues that the cultural industries (from print to software engineering) in Lebanon employ just over 23,000 workers. While this number has undoubtedly grown since 2007, particularly owing to a recent boom in the software industry (Beirut recently inaugurated a digital district and encourages 'startups' in this field), the number still signifies a small but highly productive and probably tightly-knit (although certainly not without conflict) workforce.

The civil war was certainly a rupture in the history of Lebanese film, a rupture that in some respects has extended well beyond the signing of the 1990 peace agreement. It was only in 1999 that Lebanese cinema showed signs of life. In fact, Khatib (2008) suggests that the Lebanese film industry is still recovering from the civil war, both in terms of industry (i.e. the number of films we produce per year) and aesthetic (most feature films we produce are centred around the w[1]ar). Her findings have been corroborated to a large extent by my own fieldwork. My interlocutors would always reference the film "West Beirut" (Doueiri, 1999) as a watershed moment in Lebanese cinema: "when filmmakers in Beirut realised that 'no, we can make good films here after the civil war!'" After West Beirut, my qualitative data suggests that Lebanon went back to producing one or two feature films per year. Around nine years later, Aractingi (2008a) produced "Bosta," a musical film about a group of friends from various religious backgrounds reuniting after the civil war to form a dabkeh (traditional Lebanese dance) troupe and touring the country in a bus not too dissimilar to the one that was blown up in 1975, blowing up with it the civil war. While Aractingi himself was very proud of Bosta, citing how it achieved the highest box office sales for a Lebanese film at the time, other filmmakers I interviewed were ambivalent towards it. Some saw it as a rather 'low-brow' market oriented film: "This was the moment TV companies realised that there is a market in Lebanese cinema," one argued. "It wasn't a high-quality film necessarily, and that encouraged TV companies to invest in cinema themselves." This was the first instance in which a Bourdieusian structure to cultural production in Lebanon became apparent to me: my interlocutors drew a distinction between 'high quality films' and 'films for the market'. It is important to note here that

[1] Cf Borowiecki, 2014

as we move deeper into the pages below, so too does my analysis move away from Bourdieu but, as Hesmondhalgh (2006, p. 222) suggests: “The division between large-scale and restricted production continues to make sense as at least an initial organizing principle for thinking about the making of culture.” While West Beirut set off the production of one to two ‘high quality’ feature films in Lebanon per year, Bosta invited a more heteronomous logic to Lebanese cinema. This is evidenced by the recent increase in the number of films produced in Lebanon: during my fieldwork year, there were no less than five local features that were showcased in theatres. These were openly TV-made films: drawing mostly upon TV personalities and actors, and with an aesthetic noticeably different to well-respected films such as West Beirut. “They use their TV equipment to make these films, and you can see the difference in the image,” some of my interlocutors argued, before bestowing only upon high-brow films the status adjective of “cinema.”

Figure 1: An iconic scene from “West Beyrouth,” of the two protagonists crossing the ‘green line’ waving a white handkerchief.

In parallel to Bosta, Labaki (2008), who herself acted in Bosta, produced “Caramel,” perhaps the most widely and internationally circulated Lebanese film of all time. This was a rare occasion where a film did not openly engage with the civil war. It was about womanhood, following the parallel lives of a few friends who ran a beauty parlor in Beirut and their struggles. Caramel was very obviously a high-budget film. It almost formalised a particular Lebanese aesthetic with rather sepia-tinted colours romanticising the pre-war ArtDeco furniture most Lebanese homes still used. Labaki (2012; Hachem, 2010) went on to make two other films: “Stray Bullet” in 2010, and “Where do we go from Here” in 2012. The first of these engaged with the death of a

family member by a stray bullet, returning again to the theme of the civil war. The second, which received similar international acclaim to Caramel in 2008, merged themes of women's empowerment with the civil war, telling the story of women in a remote village who conspired to keep news of the civil war from reaching the village, maintaining peace between the Christians and Muslims in it. The film also openly engaged with hash, an illegal but commonly used recreational drug, further deepening the 'real' characters of the film. While Labaki undoubtedly fired Lebanese cinema onto the international scene, her films were not as appreciated by local filmmakers as I expected: "It's no surprise she was so successful," many argued, "she took the Hollywood model of filmmaking and gave it a Lebanese plot." Many also took issue with Labkaki's character as a producer, questioning how highly she paid herself at the expense of the overall budget of the films she made. There was undoubtedly a tremendous amount of respect shown towards her, though; most filmmakers conceded that while "she took the easy way," she still succeeded in doing so and was therefore due a lot of respect.

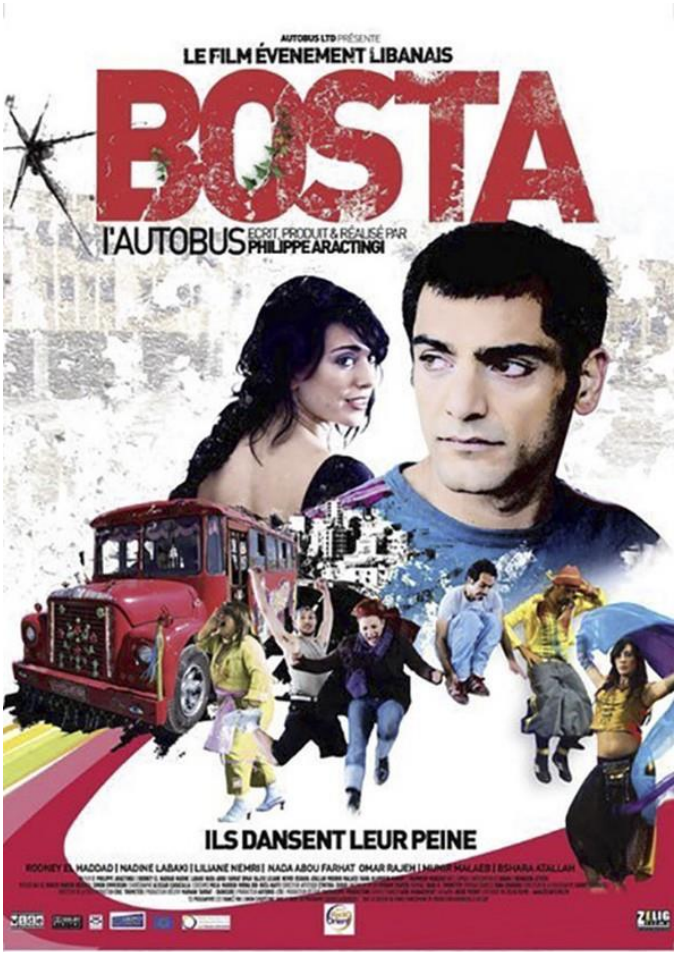

Figure 2: The official poster for "Bosta," with the film's tagline "They are dancing their pain [away]"

Figure 3: Labaki's (2008) Caramel

While my thesis is not specifically about Lebanese cinema, these above paragraphs are necessary to 'set the scene' and lay the contextual aesthetic and industry backdrop behind my thesis. Films like West Beirut (Doueiri, 1999), Zozo (Fares, 2005), Falafel (Kammoun, 2008) and later Ghadi (Dora, 2013) reignited 'high-brow' cinema in the country, Aractingi's Bosta and Under the Bombs (2008a, 2008b) established and furthered a market for Lebanese cinema and Labaki (Hachem, 2010; Labaki, 2012) 'internationalized' a Lebanese cinematic aesthetic. Together, these three interacting but autonomous pathways into cinema paved the way for high quality documentaries to be produced, most notably by Zaccak (2015, 2011, 2006). This growth and internationalization of Lebanese cinema was not without its negative consequences, however. My interlocutors were keen to point out two main issues: locally, "people started to chase $1 million budgets for their films" while internationally, "foreign producers started to impose certain conditions before funding films." Aractingi, for instance, lamented during an interview at how young filmmakers immediately seek international funding for their high-budget scripts: "I pieced together the money for my film bit by bit, a couple of thousand from here, a couple of thousand from there, it was a real struggle." Similarly, another interlocutor argued, "Sometimes it seems as if

people write their scripts for a $1 million budget instead of the story itself." By contrast, many filmmakers protested against foreign producers imposing certain conditions for funding Lebanese films. During my own fieldwork, for instance, I observed the failure of a film project in part because of the inability of foreign and local filmmakers to work together productively despite the best efforts of both. Muriel, a key participant in this thesis, framed the problem as such:

> *"Sometimes they say 'look, we'll fund your film but you have to have a German cinematographer and the main characters in your script have to be from different sectarian backgrounds. And that can kill the film. Maybe you want to make a film about your relationship with your mother and it would be genius, but you can't do that anymore. But civil war and sectarian backgrounds sells, so…"*

Internet Autonomy: Shankaboot

In light of the above-referenced disillusionment with television productions and the high-budget, high-risk deterrence of cinema, web-based cultural products offered a novel way for cultural production and expression. And in the few years in which Lebanese audiences were treated to a number of high-quality feature films in their movie theatres a new cultural product was in production in 2009: Shankaboot. This was the first ever Arabic language web-series produced, and the new medium of dissemination (YouTube) provided unprecedented opportunities to its producers (cf Kang, 2017). Funded by the BBC World Service Trust and produced by Batoota Films (a Lebanese production house first based in London and then in Beirut to produce it), Shankaboot captured the screens and attentions of young people throughout Lebanon and the Arab world with its five-to-seven-minute episodes, released twice a week. The plot centred around main character Suleiman, a 15-year-old delivery boy who precariously lived on a rooftop and made his living out of the 'tips' given to him by his delivery clients. The character himself was someone Lebanese audiences could easily relate to: Beirut streets are always teeming with 'delivery boys' on mopeds, 'betweening' past cars in rush hour traffic and startling everyone in sight with their occasional screeching breaks. Suleiman's clients were people we all knew or had in our families: grandmothers asking for very specific ingredients for their dishes and grocery stores we all had around the corner of our neighbourhoods.

Figure 4: Shankaboot developed the Lebanese cinematic aesthetic towards a more raw, urban direction.

There are a number of structural factors to also consider here: the fact that Shankaboot episodes were so short meant that their production cost wasn't so high – seasons could be shot in two-week production periods – this gave Batoota Films the budget to hire high-quality producers who were themselves keen to work on such a creatively-stimulating project (cf Wei, 2012). Director Amin Dora was known in the ad world for his witty, humorous and high-quality ads; cinematographer Muriel AboulRouss was one of the most widely-respected directors of photography in the industry; assistant director Gilles Tarazi was flown in fresh off of working on an internationally-acclaimed TV mini-series, Carlos (2010); producer Katia Saleh and lead scriptwriter Bass Breche were both extremely well-respected high-brow filmmakers with strong links to the British market.

In 2011, Shankaboot became the first Arabic-language production to win an Emmy Award. Already in its fifth season upon receiving the award, since launching in 2009, Shankaboot had accumulated a massive online following in Lebanon and the Arab World for its episodes - released on YouTube on Tuesdays and Fridays - and online presence through Twitter and Facebook, consolidated by guerrilla marketing stencils and campaigns all over Beirut. The series was followed by the production of a number of other web-series with varying degrees of success. Beirut I Love You (BILY), funded by a TV station called the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation (LBC), was the story of a group of friends from different sectarian backgrounds. It rose to prominence as

Shankaboot's fifth and final season was in post-production. After both Shankaboot and BILY had concluded, Yahoo! approached Shankaboot's producer, Katia Saleh, for a new web-series that would be used to promote their new online video platform. Katia brought together different members of the Shankaboot and BILY crews for the production of Fasateen, which centred around the intersection of the lives of three women and was meant to have an empowering message. Valet Parking was the last of this first wave of web-series enabled by Shankaboot. The 2013 production whose plot centred around the adventures of a young man who worked in valet parking was funded by Future television (a TV station) but was discontinued after a 14-episode season.

While Valet Parking did draw upon some of the crewmembers who produced the other three web-series outlined above, it broke from the structure of short, quick episodes towards a more TV-influenced 30-minute episode format. The producers of Shankaboot and Valet Parking, furthermore, did not share the friendliest of relationships at that point in time. By 2013 the web-series trend in Lebanon had subsided and would not return for another year, but this production of three web-series in quick succession by a more or less similar crew, and the tensions these shared with the fourth outlier series, are indicative of the formation of distinct networks of film producers, junior and senior, whose personal and professional relationships with each other last until today (albeit having gone through a variety of changes and transformations). Taken in isolation and at first sight, there is not much that is 'new' to academic understandings of cultural production about a bunch of people collaborating, repeatedly (Bechky, 2006; Blair, 2001; Jones, 1996) to produce series, and while it could be argued that web-series provide academics with new forms of cultural production to engage with (cf Christian, 2010; Hjorth, 2013; Waldfogel, 2009), Shankaboot, BILY and Fasateen were all produced like all other films (more on this below). But it is the *situatedness* of these web-series (with their organizational and aesthetic contexts) as the firsts of their kind in the Arab world that I believe provides opportunities to ask new questions of the sociology of cultural production. This was a new 'world' or 'field' (as per Becker (1984) and Bourdieu (1993) respectively) that came into being and we were there to witness it. I myself was there to experience it and then to study it (the methodological implications of which I discuss in chapter three). But what (if anything) and how (if at all) can it contribute to which specific sites of debate in the sociology of cultural production? Having provided a minimum of

context, to be further supplemented with ethnographic detail in the chapters ahead, and begun to trace the broad contours of our object of inquiry, I now locate these Beiruti networks of film production in the academic literature this thesis aims to contribute to.

Filmmakers and Filmmaking in the Social Sciences

The film industry owes much of the mainstream social scientific attention it initially received to a wider interest in the increasing casualisation of labour in post-industrial economies (Blair, 2003, pp. 677–678; Christopherson and Storper, 1989; Storper and Christopherson, 1987, pp. 104–106). Research agendas set forth by the likes of Sassen (1998, p. 137) on the "casualization of the employment relation," Carnoy (2009, 1999) on flexible work, and later Castells (2011, p. 281) and Rainie and Wellman (2012, p. 171) on "flex-timers" and "tele-workers" respectively, found in the project-based organisation of the film industry an able and suitable empirical testbed. Indeed, the film industry in the US had been operating on a project basis since 1948 (Hellmuth, 1950; Jones and Walsh, 1997, p. 59), and in the UK since the 1980s (Dex et al., 2000; Saundry, 1998; Saundry and Nolan, 1998).

Workers in these project based labour markets are characterised as flexibly specialised (Christopherson, 2008; Christopherson and Storper, 1989; Storper and Christopherson, 1987) in that they undertake a variety of roles across shorter-term projects (eg. camera operator in one project, camera assistant the next) unlike the longer term contracts prevalent in the pre-1948 "roster system[2]" (Christopherson and Storper, 1989, p. 343). It must be noted that the authors were particularly critical of the process of flexible specialization, arguing it is the result of a "new politics of production" (*ibid*) where employers (in this case large studios) could more easily manoeuvre market fluctuations while some sections of employees (producers) had to deal with increasing

[2] Whereby actors and directors would be contracted exclusively to one film studio on a long-term basis, occasionally being 'loaned out' to others for specific films.

instability. Based on their statistical analysis of employment figures in Hollywood, Christopherson and Storper (1989, pp. 345 – 346) argue:

"Even within production occupations, we observed significant divisions between core and peripheral work forces. A peripheral worker earns a high hourly wage but has a "blue-collar" standard of living. A core worker earns a high annual income and has a dense network of social relationships at work, as well as security and status."

The core/periphery structure for 'employees' is corroborated in the work of Faulkner and Anderson (1987), who first asserted that when Hollywood filmmakers make a successful film together, they tend to collaborate again on future projects. Other than increasing the chances of finding future work, this also indirectly increased their next film's budget and its chances of success[3]. The authors combined credit data from Hollywood films (identifying collaborations), measures of success (reviews) with interviews with Hollywood filmmakers, finding that there is a "sharp separation" in contracting between the elite "winners" and peripheral "non-winners" (Faulkner and Anderson 1987, p. 908). There is a subtle nuance underlying their choice of words here: "winners" and "non-winners" (*ibid*) suggests a deeper continuum as opposed to a straight dichotomy: both core and peripheral workers suffered increasing uncertainty with the demise of the roster system as studios started making more money. In this respect, Christopherson and Storper (1989, p. 341) argue that the higher hourly wages offered in order to compensate for increasing uncertainty had a differential impact on core and peripheral workers. According to them, uncertainty was less of a problem for core workers who had little trouble finding new contracts, unlike peripheral workers. When put into dialogue with Faulkner and Anderson (1987), however, it becomes interesting to note it was not a case of 'rich getting richer and poor getting poorer', rather

[3] Faulkner and Anderson (1987) also shed light on how repeat collaborations produce a successful core and unsuccessful periphery of filmmakers. This contribution has since been corroborated by, among others, Cattani et al., 2008; Cattani and Ferriani, 2008; Zuckerman, 2004). This, however, is not directly relevant to the topic at hand.

a case of both rich and poor workers getting poorer while production companies got richer[4].

As the new industrial politics became more ingrained in film production, attention was turned towards career progression. These were said to be boundaryless (Arthur, 1994; Arthur and Rousseau, 2001; Jones, 1996; Jones and Walsh, 1997), characterised by their development across various firms and projects (see also Alexander, 2003, pp. 131–151; McKinlay and Smith, 2009). By contrast to the above authors, Jones (1996) was less critical of the 'flexibility' of boundaryless careers, perhaps because by that time "the most common career pattern in the film industry" (*ibid* p. 59) was already that of a freelancer. She argued that it is projects, not firms, that organise labour in the film industry[5] (*ibid*) and characterised boundaryless project-based careers as following three phases: 1) socialisation into the industry, 2) building reputations and making contacts, 3) maintaining the career and balancing it with personal needs (*ibid* pp. 63 – 67; see also Jones and DeFillippi, 1996). Relating Jones' work to the above-cited earlier literature confirms the normalisation of flexible specialisation. Moreover, her characterisation of boundaryless careers as following three stages provides an insightful contribution to the core / periphery directionality. Followed by attempted mobility from periphery to core in the first two stages, Jones alludes to filmmakers 'taking stock' (cf Platman, 2004) after attaining a degree of stability and attempting to balance the professional with the personal. Faulkner and Anderson (1987 p. 887) characterise filmmaking careers sans periphery-to-core:

> *"Building a career line is an uncertain and often erratic process, with quite a range of outcomes possible in the form of (a) continuity of contracts over a period of time and (b) a range of recurrent ties with many and different kinds of people in the business."*

[4] For reasons not unrelated to this dynamic, the audiovisual, broadcasting and advertising sectors exhibited rapid growth in this period (Menger 1999, p. 543).

[5] I engage more closely with the relationship between 'projects' (films) and their makers in chapter five

The project-based and boundaryless nature of film and cultural work presents significant methodological challenges[6] (Menger, 1999, 2001, 2006) for academics[7], however, with film workers and artists taking on a variety of jobs but remaining underemployed in oversupplied markets. For Menger (1999), artists have to perpetually balance the scales between artistic expression and economic necessity. Indeed, the rock-and-a-hard-place position of film workers is explored in Wei's (2012) ethnography of filmmakers on a reality television show, describing how filmmakers do not necessarily like to work in reality television, animating Menger's (1999) observation of artistic expression versus economic necessity. Wei (2012, p. 462) argues that filmmakers manage the "fundamental tension" between maintaining their "artistic identities" while compromising "their tastes and values to accommodate commercial demands" (*ibid*) by engaging in identity work. This resonates particularly well with Jones' (1996) description of boundaryless filmmaking careers being "crafted" (*ibid* p. 63), where filmmakers negotiate their presence and self in the market. Still, though, the literature cited in this paragraph can be said to add an additional layer to - rather than do away with - Christopherson and Storper's earlier work on the increasing instability of filmmaking careers amid imbalanced industrial developments. Christopherson's (2008) updated analysis of industry reports (in the US), union data and interviews found that the "new politics of production" (Christopherson and Storper 1989, p. 343) is still prevalent, with an increasing number of cultural products being produced at decreasing budgets while often yielding higher profits. Moreover, Christopherson's (2008, p. 88) discussion of the "decline of professional (…) and rise of the hybrid, crossover workforce" sheds light on some of the exclusionary characteristics of the US film industry towards women and minorities (*ibid* pp. 89 - 91)[8].

[6] This in addition to the notorious difficulty in obtaining access to them (see Ortner, 2010)
[7] And only academics, as Gerber and Childress (2017) have helpfully pointed out
[8] Following on from the hybridization of the workforce, more recent contributions have pointed towards a one-person DIY film crew (Cheng, 2007).

The dominance of men[9] in the film industry is not a phenomenon restricted to the US, however. Grugulis and Stoyanova's (2012, 2011) ethnography of small production houses in England showed that female in-house production assistants and interns were usually given secretarial and administrative jobs while males took over work that provided more opportunities for career progression. Similarly, drawing upon semi-structured interviews with 12 with women aged between 21 and 29 doing unpaid internships in the creative industries in Toronto, Shade and Jacobson (2015) shed light on some of the exploitative characteristics of this type of cultural work (see also Hesmondhalgh, 2010). They conclude that these internships, seen as an "instrumental way" (*ibid*, p. 200) to progress careers, reified class structures: only "upper-class youth with family support" were able to take advantage of these "opportunities" (*ibid*). Furthermore, and in line with Grugulis and Stoyanova's (2012) contributions, they shed nuanced light on the gendered nature of unpaid internships underlying the increasing normalization of free labour within the creative industries:

> *"The gendered nature of unpaid internships was largely ignored by our participants, which may point to the insidious gendered nature of unpaid internships and the repeated history of devaluing women's unpaid work. Yet their perception is that within the creative sector, internships, and specific tasks, are disproportionately gendered"* (Shade and Jacobson 2015, p. 198).

Alongside gendered and racialised dynamics, the inherent insecurity and uncertainty of working in a freelance, project-based market has also been social scientifically investigated. Blair et al. (2001); Blair (2003, 2001); Blair and Rainnie (2000); Daskalaki and Blair (2002) have found that film workers form semi-permanent workgroups (SPWGs) in the UK. Other than reducing uncertainty at securing future work for workers themselves, SPWGs also make it easier for producers commissioning projects to "buy in groups" rather than

[9] White, middle class, men, as the increasingly rich literature on typecasting minorities shows us (Friedman et al., 2017; Friedman and O'Brien, 2017; Zuckerman et al., 2003).

piece together a whole crew from individuals (Blair 2001, p. 161). Antcliff et al. (2007), meanwhile, discuss the 'baggage' that comes with SPWG membership and the pressure members feel to be available whenever the SPWG needs them, lest they be replaced by other members (see also Platman (2004, 2002)). These draw parallels with Christopherson and Storper's (1989) observations on the new politics of production where uncertainty is left for workers to manage and production companies to benefit from.

While these contributions to academic understandings of filmmakers and their careers serve particularly to nuance and further debates in the sociology of work, they also risk painting a picture of filmmaking careers as rather removed from their local social, cultural and personal contexts. It must be noted here that Blair et. al.'s (2001, p. 180) work subtly mentions an increasing conflation of personal and professional lives in filmmaking careers, referring to instances where people gain SPWG membership through family contacts and friends. Her claim is echoed by Grugulis and Stoyanova (2012, p. 1314), who critically state that friendship networks played an important role in identifying and hiring film workers because of the limited, short term and low budget nature of projects. Similarly, Bechky (2006, pp. 15–18) sheds light on some of the interactions between crewmembers coordinating on set (such as showing appreciation or admonishing). Neither of the above, however, present a coherent account of how these 'symbolic' interactions or interpersonal relationships impact production networks or the networks embedded in them. This thesis aims to contribute to the above literature by engaging more closely with contingencies such as friendships, loyalty to certain aesthetic principles and situated experience in project-based freelance employment towards a more comprehensive academic understanding of filmmakers and their careers.

Losing "Artists" in Translation

The translation of knowledge on project-based filmmakers as cultural workers into debates in the sociology of work, particularly on the casualisation of work in post-industrial economies, has never been a smooth process, though. There are a number of potential reasons for this unease: Expanding upon Menger's (2001) observation that artists are a theoretically *and* methodologically challenging population to study, Gerber and Childress (2017, p. 236) suggest that "artists' professional status is a problem for researchers" but not artists themselves. Another reason might be the sheer speed of advances in technologies of cultural production in recent years. In his critique of Bourdieu that I engage with more closely in chapter two, (Hesmondhalgh, 2006, p. 219) references the "profound transformations in the field of the cultural production in the 20th century." Indeed, it might not be entirely preposterous to suggest that debates in the sociology of work and cultural production have struggled to keep up with the rapidly blurring boundaries between 'producer' and 'consumer'[10]. The situated experience of filmmakers, like that of many other cultural workers, has been increasingly lost in this translation. In a seminal, almost debate-defining book and accompanying essay, Tiziana Terranova (2004, p. 77; 2000) set forth the autonomist Marxist side of the argument: "the conditions that make free labour an important element of the digital economy are based on a difficult, experimental compromise between the historically rooted cultural and affective desire for creative production (…) and the current capitalist emphasis on knowledge as the main source of added value". The argument, reductively illustrated and intentionally described in a way that relates to filmmakers, is that the 'prosumers' or 'produsers' (Bruns, 2009; Comor, 2011) behind the user-generated content on YouTube are engaging in a form of self-exploitation – since they are not paid for their work that drives YouTube profits. Focusing specifically on filmmakers in television, Ursell (2000)

[10] Here the sociology of music stands out as by far the most advanced in comparison to other sociologies of cultural production.

reflects upon the relationship between the 'addictive' nature of cultural work (cf Rowlands and Handy, 2012) and the 1990 Broadcasting Act's[11] acceleration of the casualization of creative work. There is plenty of evidence, she argues (Ursell 2000, p. 807), for a Marxist explanation of "the institutions of capitalism responding to falling rates of profitability by an aggressive degradation of the terms and conditions of employment and (…) a more aggressive exploitation of labour power." But evidence from casual workers in television points to a certain complicity or "voluntarism" of the workforce, she argues. "Television workers commodify themselves, for reasons which may be purely existential, or which may be so as to maximize their individual market appeal, or which may be both. They organize their own labour market, their own work teams and their own marketing, in an economy of favours," Ursell (2000, p. 822) concludes. This critical picture she paints resonates with Blair (2001, p. 161) on producers now being able to buy crews "in groups" on the one hand, and the related gendered outcomes of informal hiring practices identified by Wreyford (2015, 2013) on the other. Hesmondhalgh (2010, p. 271) acts as a grounding participant in this debate[12], productively highlighting the extent to which *work* (and consequently cultural *workers),* are increasingly forgotten in such conversations:

"The perspectives outlined above have provided some stimulating and necessary interventions against complacent celebrations of cultural-industry work, and of the relations between production and consumption in the digital era. Understandably, though, given their innovative character, and the fact that they have been responding to relatively new social and cultural transformations that are difficult to comprehend as they unfold, some important conceptual issues remain underexplored. For example: are we really meant to see people who sit at their computers modifying code or typing out responses to TV shows as 'exploited' in the

[11] Alongside Ursell (2000), see Dex et al. (2000) for a detailed engagement with the effects of the act on the creative industries in the UK

[12] It is worth appreciating here his recognition of the contribution of the feminist notion of affective labour (more on which below) to the Marxist notion of free labour.

same way as those who endure appalling conditions and pay in Indonesian sweatshops?"

There is much to learn from and reflect upon more recent studies drawing upon the notion of immaterial free labour, though. Farrugia et al.'s (2017, p. 2) use of the notion of affective labour – "work in which the mobilisation, performance and enactment of subjectivities and social relationships is critical to the labour performed, and in which the creation of sensations, emotions, or embodied experiences constitutes the true 'product' of the work" – on young bar workers sensitizes us to questioning the role of (embodied) affective labour in *filmmaking* careers. For instance, in chapter four of this thesis I describe having to endure a series of meetings with a production house as different staff members repeated, almost word-for-word, the same brief to us – time that we were not paid for and we had to 'give' to this work. A more nuanced version of such questions is my discussion of spending hours on end perfecting a panning technique the night before a shooting day – an equally pleasurable and painful experience that I elaborate upon in chapter six. But the sense remains that in spite of such productive debates and contributions, academic theorizations of the lives of filmmakers are still on some level divorced from the situated experience of their research populations. Reflecting upon this intellectual impasse, Gill and Pratt (2008, p. 18) suggest that the meanings cultural workers give to their experiences should be central to our research on them. "Sometimes networking may be 'compulsory sociality' (Gregg, 2009) required to survive in a field; at other times it may be pleasurable 'hanging out' (Pratt, 2006)." Much like Hesmondhalgh's (2010, p. 277 – 278) call for "some sense of prioritisation" to be weaved into undifferentiated critiques of free labour, Gill and Pratt (2008, p. 20) also separate the political trees from the empirical wood:

"For some, the figure of the artist or creative worker has been emblematic of the experience of precarity: negotiation short-term, insecure, poorly paid, precarious work in conditions of structural uncertainty. As we have noted, however, this is

contested and precarity might be better thought of as a political rallying point for a diverse range of struggles about labour, migration and citizenship."

Gregg (2009, pp. 211 - 212) builds on this by pointing out that academics engage in a significant amount of affective and immaterial labour themselves: "this makes it difficult for researchers to understand such behaviour in terms of labour politics, let alone provide grounds for critiquing the motivations for the affective labour engaged in by others." Banks and Deuze's (2009, p. 426) introduction to a special edition in the International Journal of Cultural Studies, meanwhile, finds food for thought in the words of Latour (2005, pp. 11–12): "you have to grant them back the ability to make up their own theories of what the social is made of." Overall, there seems to be a degree of reticence on the part of academics to subscribe to the rather positive accounts of everyday life that research participants working in the cultural industries often provide. Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2010, p. 7) illustrate: "We take seriously our interviewees' accounts but do not necessarily take what they told us at face value." When reading the academic contributions cited in this introductory chapter, I would often find myself perplexed and wondering "Where is the fun in all this?" Surely, I thought, the situated pleasurable experiences of cultural producers cannot *all* be relegated to "addiction" (Rowlands and Handy, 2012) or a naïve sense of "making it" in "cool industries" (Neff et al., 2005). My point here is certainly *not* to undermine the critical approaches undertaken by academics much more knowledgeable than myself, rather to contribute to such debates by 1) cautiously questioning the degree to which such critical approaches might 'mask' the positive situated experience of cultural workers and to 2) paint a more nuanced and multi-layered picture. In doing so, throughout this thesis I maintain an analytic loyalty to the situated experience of my research population and a stance of 'informed-but-not-determined-by' towards the various frameworks that seek to explain this experience.

Beyond the Exploited vs Actualised: Mediated Selves?

Filmmakers, being the challenging population that they are, are embroiled in debates not just in the sociology of work but also in the sociology of cultural production. Sociologists, as the discussion above has shown, are not quite sure what to make of the lives of filmmakers. But they are also, as the discussion below will show, not quite sure what to make of the *things* that filmmakers *make*. A partisan and contributor to this particular debate, Strandvad (2010, p. 3) writes a helpful bird's-eye summary of discussions previous in her promotion of socio-material approaches to the sociology of art:

> *"On the one hand, creative work in neoliberal Western societies can be seen as a version of capitalism that alienates humans from their needs and nature. On the other hand, creative work can be seen as a refuge from the capitalist wage labor system that provides access to a shared human nature, because it is a productive activity which is not conducted for an economic purpose."*

Reflecting on debates in the sociology of art, Zolberg (1990) criticised sociologists for their hegemonic focus on processes of status creation at the expense of processes of art creation (*ibid*, p. 55 – 56), arguing this leads to dangerously reductionist accounts. More precisely, Zolberg (1990) distinguished between two dominant approaches to the sociology of art at the time: those that study the art object sociologically, and those that treat the art object as a social process. She is critical of the fact that the former's interest in the "social symbolic use of art" (*ibid*, p. 56), and the latter's use of art as "unobtrusive measures of social, historical, political, or other social processes" (*ibid*, p. 80), usually comes at the expense of the art work itself[13]. To this end, she calls for a more reflexive approach, mindful of the "middle levels of societal structures" (Zolberg 1990, p. 212) that relate subjective experiences with

[13] Here it is worth mentioning that Faulkner (1985, pp. 3–4) agreed with one side of Zolberg's (1990) critique. He was critical of the "focus on the media content rather than on its employees, or on the art of popular entertainment rather than on the artists, performers and technicians."

objective social processes. Twenty years later, Born's (2010) seminal essay reflected sociology's continuing teething problems when it comes to ruminating art objects. Born calls for new directions in the sociology of cultural production that incorporate cultural products into analysis as a means of overcoming the intellectual fork in the road. Without pre-empting too much discussions in the pages below, I should state here that Zolberg's (1990) calls to search for middle level societal structures that mediate between subjective experience and social processes anchor the intellectual project underlying this thesis, as does Born's (2010, p. 192) poignant statement on the things we miss out on in our analytic rejection of objects and cultural products:

> *"If there is an overriding dimension of creative practice that has been lamentably neglected – by Bourdieu, production of culture and cultural studies alike – and that demands to be studied, it is the insistent, existential reality of the historical orientation of producers by reference to the aesthetic and ethical trajectories or coordinates of the genres in which they work, an orientation that enables or affords agency."*

Similarly to Strandvad (2010) above, Born's (2010) comments come from a partisan perspective on the state of the debate. Indeed, both authors reflect an emerging object-oriented ontologists' focus on mediation[14]. There is significant overlap between what I have characterised above as debates in the sociology of work and here in the sociology of cultural production; Born's (2010, p. 199) argument sheds light on this overlap. She suggests, for instance, that "our critical and theoretical discourses have lagged behind (…) changes in creative practice." Unlike Zolberg (1990), however, the path forward outlined by Born (*ibid)* is centred upon the notion of mediations:

[14] Although my conversations with people close to Born have been inconsistent on the degree to which Born herself would be happy to be placed in the object-oriented camp; some have suggested she would, others not.

"The intention, then, is to restore questions of aesthetics and form, now inflected through an analytics of mediation, and on this basis to proffer judgements of value and indicate their basis so as to revivify critical debate, not close it down[15]*."*

The majority of Born's (2015a, 2015b, 2005) work on mediation arises from her studies of music, despite the somewhat marginal contribution of her ethnographies of the BBC (Born, 2002) and Channel 4 (Born, 2003) in fleshing out some of this work (see Born, 2010). Informed by Deleuze's definition of assemblages, as "a multiplicity made of up heterogeneous components, each having a certain autonomy, a multiplicity "which establishes liasons [or] relations between them" (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987, p. 69 in Born, 2015b, pp. 359–360), Born encourages us to think of the musical object as an assemblage: "an aggregation of sonic, social, corporeal, discursive, visual, technological and temporal mediations" (Born 2015b, p. 359 – 360)[16]. Strandvad's (2012) socio-material sociology of art resonates with and complements this line of thinking. Helpfully relating this discussion back to the situated experience of filmmakers, Strandvad (2010, p. 18) argues that the production of films takes place through multiple sets of mediations: "imagined props, potential collaborators and existing artworks become mediators" in the development of the idea of a film. To illustrate by drawing upon an example I unpack further in the pages below, during pre-production participants in my research would always ask what *"it needs"* when referring to the film-in-development. At least in the minds of film *producers*, then, films are active participants in the production process. But Strandvad's (2010, p. 8) work also helpfully relate the notion of mediations

[15] Of course, for Born (2010, p. 199) this is part of a wider project on the post-Bourdieusian future of cultural sociology: "The ambition of a theory of cultural production must be encompassment: the ability to take in and analyse diacritically, much more than the practitioners and cultural fields themselves, the movements and logics of their social and aesthetic dynamics; and to read one tendency in relation to others, but fully historically and with an 'internal' comprehension of the positivity of the aesthetic as it is generally conceived and practices by cultural producers."

[16] As alluded to previously, Born (2015b, p. 360) integrates the notion of mediation within a framework approaching the heights of grand theory that focuses on four planes of mediation: 1) musics (mediated) production of "its own diverse social relations", 2) its mediated animation of imagined communities, 3) its mediation of "wider social identity formations" and 4) its mediated relationship with the "social and institutional forms that provide the grounds for its production."

more explicitly back to the above-discussed debates surrounding the situated experience of filmmakers and cultural producers: she argues that there is a certain "magic" in working with materials and technologies towards the production of films. Strandvad (2010, p. 17) is informed by Hennion in her definition of a mediators as "any object and activity, which is necessary for the execution of creative work." In this way, mediations are the emergent properties of our interactions with objects (material or immaterial). As I grappled with the apparent under-theorisation of 'fun' in the production of films in my research, such arguments certainly matched more readily onto some of my own observations and experiences, as did Gomart and Hennion's (1999, pp. 226–227) definition of passion:

> *"Passion, emotion, being dazzled, elation, possession, trance, all of these are instances of events in which there is no action - in either a traditional or a radical sense of the term. They describe movement in which loss of control is accepted and prepared for. One's hand is given over to an other, and one abandons one's being to what seizes it. As we have noted, we do not take 'passion' to describe the subject's instrumental mastery of things, nor her mechanical determination of things. Rather, passion is the abandonment of forces to objects and the suspension of the self."*

Similarly (minus the object-oriented onotology), Crossley and Bottero (2015, p. 38) argue for the necessity to "explore the mechanisms involved in the intrinsic pleasures of musicking." Drawing upon MacIntyre's (1985) notion of internal goods, the authors explore the commitment and enthusiasm with which amateurs (and to a lesser degree professionals) approach music-making. While their work is mostly focussed on amateur musicians and enthusiasts, it certainly helps push the direction of the debate on professionals towards greater nuance. "Even the most wizened professionals," Crossley and Bottero (2015, p. 39) cautiously argue, "retain a passion for and commitment to their music world." The inherent relationality in Strandvad's (2010), Gomart and Hennion's (1999) and Crossley and Bottero's (2015) contributions provide curious pathways for deeper engagement. If we are to develop a close, textured understanding of the lives of cultural workers and their networks, then surely

we must be able to theorise – at least to some extent – *fun* and *pleasure*. Kadushin (2002) argues that we live our lives balancing between feelings of safety and efficacy, but there remains a sense that academic approaches to cultural production seem to be a little *too* focused on the 'safety' element. As chapter six of this thesis attempts to synthesize, these curious pathways for deeper engagement with 'fun' also trace the cutting edge of ontological debates between traditional and object-oriented sociology, potentially asking some poignant and productive questions of it.

To recap, despite the obvious and many differences among UK, US and Beirut as industrial contexts, the above literatures serve to contextualise filmmakers and provide a knowledge base upon which this thesis aims to build. Indeed, the idea behind this introductory chapter is to establish the ways in which the cases of the US and UK, and the accompanying debates and intellectual battles they produce, shed a framing light on the Lebanese case (see Crossley and Edwards, 2016, p. 4.2). As I show throughout this thesis, freelance filmmakers in Beirut also experience and manage similar forces of uncertainty, artistic expression, economic necessity, affective labour, in crafting their own careers. Indeed, the lives of filmmakers in Beirut and the networks they comprise seem to be opaquely situated within the various above-discussed frameworks that shed an almost-but-not-quite explanatory light on their complex, precarious and highly contingent condition: while SPWGs and the crafting of boundaryless careers certainly capture much of the rational economic characteristics of these flexibly specialised subjects, they fall short of incorporating some of the more subjective, social, cultural and indeed political nuance underlying the increasingly blurred boundaries of "work" and "not work". On the other hand, while emerging DIY and affective labour literatures address well the contingencies and specificities of situated experience, their emergence out of research populations who are at the interstice of "producer" and "consumer" requires an evaluation – with surgical precision – of the merits of placing them in dialogue with networks who are themselves firmly in the "professional producer" side of the increasing liquidity between those who produce as work

and those whose consumption producers. This thesis is an attempt at locating Beiruti networks of film production in these messy and blurred debates and hopefully drawing upon their situated experience to perhaps 'defog' the intellectual landscape. I engage with empirical literature on boundaryless careers, SPWGs and repeat collaborations consistently throughout the thesis. Objects and mediations come in primarily in chapters five and six, but questions of power and exploitation I intentionally leave open-ended until the concluding chapter, only occasionally peppering the thesis with relevant footnotes when necessary. The reasoning behind this is to establish a firm grasp on, and robust account of, the situated experience of my research population in the analytic chapters of my thesis before inviting reflections of power and exploitation onto these experiences. For now, I briefly discuss how I conceptualise the filmmaking industry in Beirut, a final necessity in setting the scene.

The Filmmaking Industry and Social Networks

Kadushin (1976, p. 771) argues that networks of cultural production are "interstitial" (i.e. spanning *across* social worlds) and "draped around" (*ibid*) more formal structures. With the focus being production networks, i.e. the producers, an adequate lens through which to view the social space of production work becomes necessary. Since DiMaggio's (1987) seminal work on classification in art, where the author proposed a distinction between professional, commercial, or bureaucratic art, there has been a growing interest in 'loosening' these classification systems. Flew (2013, 2012) has supported Caves' (2000) distinction between simple (those produced by small groups or individuals) and complex (those that are part of larger production processes) cultural goods, while Hesmondhalgh (2007) proposed to distinguish between broadcasting and publishing creative industries. This debate is particularly relevant in light of what Baldwin et al. (1996) call convergence: the notion that all forms of communication will be networked and hosted on the internet (see

also Boczkowski and Ferris, 2005). While convergence is not directly relevant to this thesis, it does highlight an increasing complexity in the classification of cultural products and echoes Hesmondhalgh's (2006) own contributions to the academic cannon on the accelerated complexity of the cultural industries. Kersten and Verboord (2014) similarly argue that in feature films, the dichotomy between art house and 'blockbuster' films has become increasingly fluid. Potts et al.'s (2008, p. 167) observation that current industry level classification systems such as the that of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in the UK (DCMS, 1998) and the United Nations conference on Trade and Development's (UNCTAD, 2010) definitions are based on "creative inputs and intellectual property outputs" (Potts et al. 2008, p. 167) resonates with the perspective of this thesis in that it aims to centre its definition of the creative industries on the production (as opposed to consumption) of cultural goods.

It is worth briefly referring to Menger's (1999, p. 565) recommendation that artists be understood as small firms: "drawing resources and building careers from changing combinations of roles, income sources, work settings and employment statuses." It would make little analytic sense to adopt any of the 'traditional' industry definitions above, as they focus on the cultural products rather than the work of production or the workers themselves, thus a priori limiting the number of potential 'combinations' Menger (1999, p. 565) refers to. To illustrate: the UK's DCMS (1998) places a distinction between film and television, while UNCTAD (2010, p. 8) distinguishes between visual arts (such as photography), audiovisuals (film), and new media (including the speculative "digital and other creative services"). These separations are problematic since the organisation of labour in producing television, or web-series, or films is largely the same (bar for differences in naming and stylistic conventions, which I discuss below). Indeed, the view most closely suited to the situated experience of cultural workers is Potts et. al.'s (2008) social network markets definition based on demand and supply. This approach does not a priori prescribe any characteristics on those commissioning production, allowing to

engage with formal structures that production networks drape around empirically:

> *"The standard industrial classification system was developed over half a century ago when the economy could be categorized much more readily than now by the type of industrial activity in which a firm is engaged and the nature of its material inputs and outputs. Since then, however, the economic system has become considerably more complex and service-oriented and the creative industries have risen and developed into this space"* (Potts et. al. 2008, p. 168).

Bechky (2006, 2002) refers in passing to the complexity of the institutional context surrounding film production, discussing briefly the difference between films produced by unionised and non-unionised crewmembers. Bielby and Bielby (2002) make similar references to the various forces at play when writing for Hollywood film and TV. Coe (2000), meanwhile, discusses how the international (Hollywood) and local (indigenous) markets shape the Vancouver film industry. Separately, while Born's (2003, 2002) ethnographies of the BBC and Channel 4 juxtapose cultural production work with the institutions that commission it, their direct relevance here is diminished by the fact that the cultural workers in question were predominantly 'in-house' staff as opposed to freelancers. The significance of a social network markets approach for chapter four is particularly apparent when considering the freelance nature of the production networks studied in this thesis, and resonates with the boundaryless-ness of flexibly specialised filmmaking careers: freelance production networks 'get' or 'take on' projects commissioned by patrons through weak ties (i.e. ties that bridge distinct social networks) Granovetter (2005, 1985, 1973) or brokers and structural holes (i.e. people whose structural position allows them to 'broker' information) Burt (2004, 1976). This provides sufficient analytic space to consider the variation in logics and stylistic conventions per project, but also operationalises the influential role those commissioning production (the patrons) play in the production context (and thus on production networks).

So in light of all this situatedness, this complexity, variety and contingency, what are some of the broader *shared* path dependencies through which 'culture' in is produced?

The Making of Films

The production process of films necessarily follows at least three mutually exclusive phases: pre-production, production and post-production. Santagata (2010, pp. 15–25) refers to six phases of cultural production: selection of artists; conception (of artwork); production; conservation; distribution; consumption. It is important to note here that this is meant as a general scheme of cultural production as opposed to a film-specific one. For Santagata (2010), the production phase includes what in filmmaking circles would be a phase on its own: post-production. This is the phase in which the footage is edited, sound mixed and designed, image coloured and polished, the phase in which raw footage and sound are moulded into a coherent final product mirroring (to varying degrees) the script. Further, Santagata's (2010) conservation phase refers specifically to historical and natural artefacts as cultural products – there is no conservation phase in the making of films. Krätke (2002), meanwhile, takes a more film-focused approach represented in figure five below. Here, the process is divided into four phases: pre-production, production, post-production and distribution.

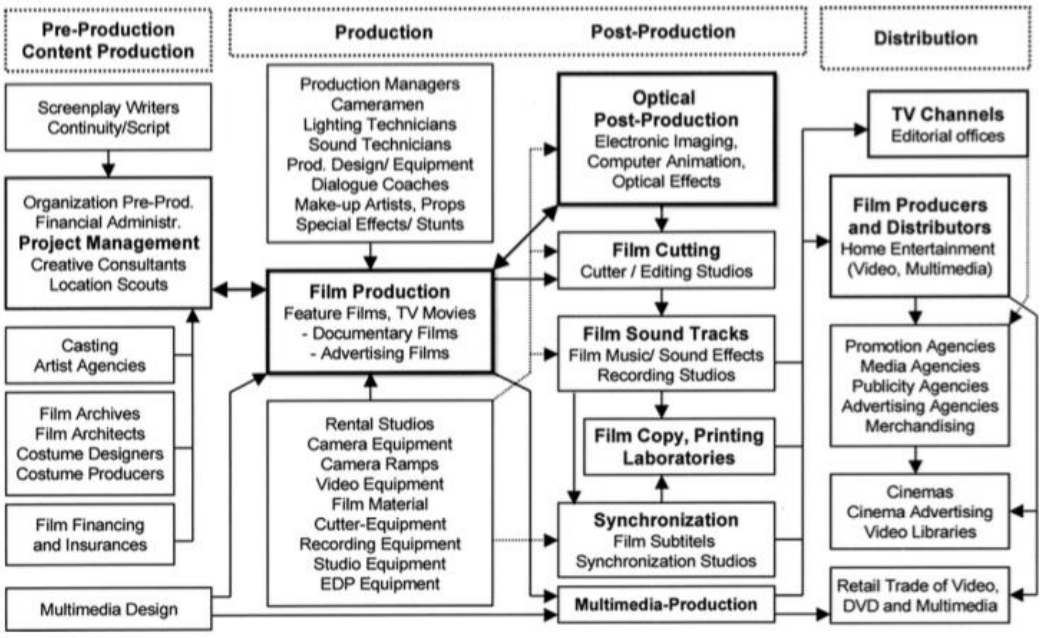

Figure 5: Krätke's (2002, p. 31) representation of the phases of film production

The pre-production phase is where, in Santagata's (2010) terms, artists are selected. Most of the time in film, however, filmmakers are commissioned by a project that already has been conceptualised (through the script). Directors, directors of photography and crewmembers certainly influence and shape the final product (and are indeed shaped by them - see Strandvad, 2011, for instance), but there is already a pre-conceived idea for them to work with. It is in the pre-production phase where the script is examined and scrutinized with extreme precision by the director, cinematographer, producer, assistant director and production manager (more on roles below). It is also where the producer and production manager, supported by their production assistants, work to source the necessary equipment, obtain the necessary permits, and – through their location scouts – find appropriate locations to shoot the script in. Towards the end of the pre-production phase, the art department begins indexing and storing props and wardrobe, the camera department tests equipment and charges batteries while department heads agree on the production schedule.

The production phase, the most demanding and intense phase for crewmembers, is when the film is shot. The night before each shooting day (sometimes a few days in advance), crewmembers receive a call sheet from the assistant director, informing them of what they will be shooting. Organizationally, this is the toughest phase to manage: crewmembers, caterers and equipment are hired by day, so shooting days are extremely expensive for production houses. A few delays can force an extra shooting day and incur further expenses on the production. One of the most surprising things I learned during my fieldwork, in fact, was about how production managers are paid: unlike the rest of the crew, they are paid the remainder of the overall production budget – around ten percent was seen as optimal and fair. Crewmembers, meanwhile, charge different rates for the pre-production and production phases ("prep days" and "shooting days"). It is indeed this intense phase, often involving long and tiresome hours, that perhaps best captures the essence of "art as collective action" as Becker (1974) calls it, where the work of every member on the production crew shapes the final outcome. In line with Becker's symbolic interactionism, Bechky (2006, p. 3) has likened production sets to "temporary total institutions". To give an idea of the sheer scale and complexity of this collective task, the author helpfully provides a diagram of the specific roles crewmembers are commissioned to undertake on set, represented in figure six below.

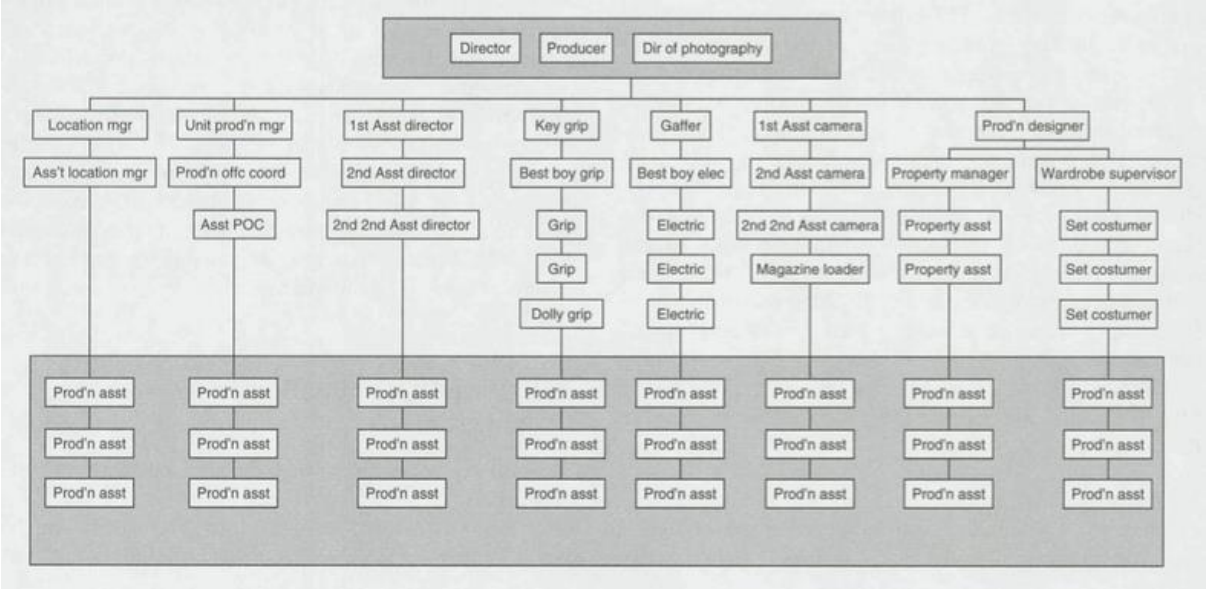

Figure 6: Bechky's (2006, p. 8) representation of roles on a film set

While the above representation does not match one-to-one on the distribution of roles on all film sets in Beirut, it is illustrative of the complexity of the work involved, with crewmembers who are often strangers to each other. On the film sets that I have observed, the location manager reports to the production designer, while the gaffers and grips report to the director of photography (albeit not always directly and sometimes through the first camera assistant). It is also worth noting here slight differences in nomenclature between production designer and art director. "Production designers carry more creative weight on projects than art directors, they are almost equal to the director and cinematographer. Art directors are a little bit below them in terms of creative control," a production designer / art director told me, before qualifying that statement: "It's also a matter of the size of the production. On bigger productions you're more of a production designer, on smaller ones more of an art director." His statements certainly resonate with Becker's (1984, p. 10; p. 18) allusion to the social construction of these roles, and begin to point to the importance of relational approach to studying cultural production. As Crossley (2015, p. 482) argues in relation to music worlds, "It is not for us, as academics, to decide what playing guitar involves or who can and cannot play." The art director's words corroborate this, and shed light on how crewmembers construct each other can have important implications on people's inclusion on credit rolls, but also their fees.

Once the raw footage and sound are fully gathered, editors in the editing team begin the post-production phase. Footage is triaged, coded and placed into different "bins"

or folders on editing software such as Final Cut Pro or Adobe Premiere (the two most widely used ones during my fieldwork). Once the initial '*visionage*' of footage is completed, editors begin constructing the timeline, translating the varied raw footage and sound into coherent, linear, cultural products. While the on-set life of crewmembers is intense, and intensely social, editors often find themselves working alone in front of the screen for hours on end, bar a few discussions with the writer, director or producer (sometimes all of them together) on the general direction of the cultural product in construction. Once a draft timeline is ready, department heads meet and make the final adjustments. Still in post-production, the colourist arrives to ensure colours on screen are as realistic (or as close to an agreed-upon aesthetic) as possible. Then, the file goes to the sound designer who cleans up, rearranges and mixes the different sonic elements of the product. The editor checks the file for one last time, inserting opening and end credits and creating the final product to be distributed. Up until this point, most video-based cultural products are produced the same way, each following this clear division between pre-production, production and post-production. Potts et al.'s (2008) above-mentioned critique of current classification systems as based solely on forms of consumption is rendered all the more potent here, as almost identical production processes are classified differently by virtue of the differences in their distribution systems. The similarities, but also subtle differences, between different types of cultural production work form the departure point for the first analytic chapter of this thesis, as I now turn to briefly describing the structure of the overall text and more specifically locating the thesis' contribution to debates in the sociology of cultural production.

Figure 7: A film set during the recce in pre-production

Figure 8: The same film set during the production of a music video (chapter six)

Thesis Structure

Having so far only roughly sketched the outlines of our object of inquiry, networks of film production in Beirut, in the next chapter (chapter two) I hone in on both the object and my approach to understanding it. I initially make the case for a relational sociological approach to the study of networks of cultural production, discussing a relational conception of agency informed by Crossley (2010a), Emirbayer (1997), Emirbayer and Goodwin (1994) and Emirbayer and Mische (1998). Specifically, I draw upon Emirbayer and Mische's (1998, p. 963) definition of agency as a "temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (…) but also oriented toward the future (…) and toward the present." Further, I subscribe to the authors' argument that agency is not something that actors possess: we do not *have* agency, we *relate agentically* ("actors engage agentically with their structuring environments" (*ibid*, p. 1004)). I then turn towards definitions of social structure, discussing its micro-level operationalisation as the empirical ties that relate actors in a network to each other and more broadly Crossley's (2010a, p. 137) conceptualisation of structure as conventions, resources and networks. I also subscribe to the above authors' consensus that social network analysis is the best developed tool through which to 'do' such a relational sociology. I end the chapter with a discussion on *why* Crossley (2010a) and social network analysis at the expense of Becker (1984) and Bourdieu (1993).

I begin chapter three with a brief descriptive overview of the research process. Here I lay bare the iterative process through which emerged three analytic planes that have come to form the substantive chapters of my thesis. This exposition allows me to discuss the various specificities of a mixed-methods social network analytic (MMSNA) methodology (Crossley and Edwards, 2016) in context. This thesis is an ethnography of my home town and its networks of film production, and so I necessarily begin by discussing what an 'ethnography at home' entailed in my case, drawing upon feminist contributions on being an intimate insider researcher (Coffey, 1999; Taylor, 2011). I then consider the influence of the 'profound shared experience' (Chavez, 2008) I share with my research participants on the research process, placing this in dialogue with debates and understandings around the notion of positionality. I then turn to the

dialogic translation[17] of qualitative data to quantitative matrices, discussing in detail the merits of such an approach but also the strategies I draw upon to circumvent its limitations. Whereas in chapter two I aim to establish a nuanced distance with Becker and Bourdieu, in chapter three I discuss the ways in which their own methodological contributions inform my research. I draw particularly upon Becker's (1967) and Gouldner's (1973) sociology of the 'underdog', placing this in dialogue with Bourdieu's (2003) own experiences of simultaneously ethnographing his hometowns in France and Kabylie in Algeria. While my thesis is conceptually closer to Becker's (1984) micro-level symbolic interactionism at the expense of Bourdieu's (1984) macro-level epistemic relationality, methodologically it is Bourdieu's (2003) participant *objectivation* that helps me make the best sense of my research experiences at home. I end the chapter with a discussion of the particular ethics of representation involved in researching – and producing theses on – one's close friends.

In chapter four I make use of Potts et al.'s (2008) mediating framework conceptualizing the cultural industries as social network markets, alluded to above. Here, I draw upon two sets of projects succeeding each other. While traditional classification systems such as the UK's DCMS (1998) would class these two sets under altogether different industries: one under 'photography' and one under 'television', the sensibility of the notion of social network markets towards the *production* of these products opens up new avenues for analysis that I venture towards. Freelance filmmakers do not just work in television, or cinema, or short films or indeed photography (cf Menger, 2006, 2001, 1999), rather across all these 'industries' on a project basis as per market demand. To this end, drawing upon the network concept of equivalence, that persons occupying similar positions play the same role (Hanneman and Riddle, 2005), I show how subtle changes in the content of the patronage tie (i.e. in the client's commissioning of production networks) influences and shapes the overall production process. Returning then to my ethnographic data, I discuss how the formation and maintenance of networks of film production is influenced by how network members *make sense of* these different production experiences. In other words, aside from whether or not network members enjoyed working with particular clients and the financial incentives involved, what is also important is what network members make of how their colleagues (fellow network

[17] 'Translation' does not do the process justice here. Indeed, as Crossley (2010b, p. 5) argues, this process disciplines qualitative data collection. I discuss this more closely in chapter three.

members) handle these contingencies. I argue, therefore, that personal and professional contingencies and considerations such as the potential durability of patronage and production ties, the availability of resources, and the *malleability* or flexibility of these of production ties in cyclical attachment and detachment to the more formal structures influence the formation and maintenance of production networks.

In chapter five I take a more longitudinal approach as I consider the influence of the films and cultural objects themselves on the formation and maintenance of the networks that produce them. Using various qualitative research methods discussed in chapter three, I reconstruct the networks that produced Shankaboot, BILY and Fasateen. I then place this time-bound two-mode network (relating people to objects) in dialogue with the production networks I observed and participated in during the fieldwork phase of my doctoral research, arriving at a highly-contextualized and illustrative 'where are they now.' In other words, I qualitatively analyse structural changes in the same network at two different time points, investigating the role played by the objects (films) in 'shifting' the structural positions of their makers. I find three overarching patterns: 1) that one's past projects mediate one's construction as a 'specialist' in particular genres, 2) the progression of one's career from 'junior' to 'senior' and, 3) over time, grant one the particular, contingent and situated stability one seeks in boundaryless (Jones, 1996; cf Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010), project-based careers. In asking what cultural objects can *do* (drawing upon Pinney, 2004, p. 8 in Rose, 2016, p. 21) I consider not only how successful past projects mediate more commercialised, more institutionalised and complex project opportunities, but also how past projects can *hinder* the careers of their makers.

Having considered the role of social network markets (chapter four) and cultural products (chapter five) in the formation and maintenance of networks of film production in Beirut, in chapter six – the final analytic chapter of this thesis – I turn to the role of personal relationships. I mentioned in the pages above how Shankaboot, BILY and Fasateen members only occasionally produce together now. In chapter six I consider the emergent properties of these now multiplex relations that subsume different types of exchanges (Kapferer, 1969) among network members. It is here that Crossley's (2010a) conception of networks as social worlds truly comes to the fore, as I draw upon Acord and DeNora's (2008) reaction to Zolberg's (1990) description of

the state of the cultural sociological debate: that "examining the arts in empirical situations of "action" promises to widen our understanding of how culture works by offering sociology a window into aesthetic experience and (…) "world building"" (Accord and DeNora, 2008, p. 227). Specifically, I refer to the shared narratives and practices emergent out of the network over time, such as their 'spillover' into life off-set as everyday practices. Furthermore, by 'skewing' Kadushin's (1995, p. 2014) use of the notion of moieties, "the partition of a tribe into two rival, but also cooperative, groups," I provide an account of the complicated multiplex relationships among network members emergent out of the multiple cyclical activation and de-activation of professional ties on a project basis over many years.

Finally, in the concluding chapter of this thesis, I attempt to synthesise the three constitutive analytic chapters of my thesis into a coherent, whole and robust response to the overriding research question this thesis aims to answer: How are networks of cultural production in Beirut formed and maintained? I then return to the specific sites of cultural sociological debate that my thesis aims to contribute to, attempting to make explicit these potential contributions. In reflecting upon the merits of my attempted contributions, I take stock of Katz et al.'s (2004, p. 312) reference to Wellman (1983), that "nothing can be properly understood in isolation or in a segmented fashion." In this section I consider some factors that my analysis could have been more mindful of or sensitised towards. Finally, taking stock of the particularities and contingencies of this case study I reflect upon how this case might illuminate *other* cases and contribute to broader understandings of networks of cultural production. I end the thesis by daring to look ahead and beyond, attempting to illuminate questions my own thesis was unable to articulate but are nonetheless fruitful to ask.

Theory – Framing Networks of Cultural Production in Beirut

Thinking about theoretical optics to guide my participation in – and observation and analysis of – the situated experience of filmmakers is no straightforward task, particularly in empirical contexts such as Beirut that have traditionally been confined to the margins of social scientific knowledge production and the development of these optics. This chapter is the result of a dialogic thought process, a back and forth between situated experience and explanatory frameworks. In the first instance, it is immediately tempting to draw upon the contribution of giants in cultural production such as Becker and Bourdieu, but we do not choose where and what we are born into and in the pages below I question their applicability to the empirical context I was born into: Beirut. Still at first thought, the situated experience and working lives of my research participants, filmmakers in Beirut, are most closely described by Castells' (2011, pp. 216–338) notion of "flex-timers" within the network society (Castells, 2000) and Rainnie and Wellman's (2012, pp. 171–197) "teleworkers". Broadly, these terms refer to networked individuals, often freelancers, on short-term, project-based contracts with unconventional working hours. Their careers progress *across* different firms as opposed to within them (Jones 1996; Arthur, 1994; Jones and Walsh, 1997). Indeed, when studying filmmakers we are studying workers just as much as artists or cultural producers: as Blair (2001) and Jones (1996) show us, their careers are themselves anchored in the projects they undertake (Jones, 1996) and furthered through processes aimed at reducing the uncertainty of securing future projects: forming semi-permanent workgroups (Blair, 2001). Furthermore, as Becker (1984) and Bourdieu (1993) have shown us, artists do not – cannot[18] – operate completely on their own. Their very construction as artists is contingent upon their being given this title by those around them. But people are also the children of their parents, the siblings of their siblings, and the parents of their children. "The individual human agent

[18] I engage with Becker's optimism in this regard below

is constituted as such when he [sic] is recognized and named by other agents" (Pizzorno, 1991, p. 220). Their construction, as it were, by the people they relate to outside of a filmmaking context influences and shapes their construction as filmmakers and artists. The multiple webs of relationships with people and (cultural) objects – networks – in which people are embedded both enable and constrain them. Understanding the formation and maintenance of networks of film production in Beirut, then, necessitates a consideration of the influence of the other networks they are also part of: "Nothing can be properly understood in isolation or in a segmented fashion" (Wellman, 1983 in Katz et al., 2004, p. 312).

To this end, I adopt a relational sociological approach to my study of these filmmakers, an approach more loyal to their situated experience of belonging to multiple groups, where the "individual persons, whether strategic or norm following, are inseparable from the transactional [relational] contexts within which they are embedded" (Emirbayer, 1997, p. 287). My thesis is primarily focused upon a network of people who, after collaborating on the production of a web-series in 2009, went on to collaborate on a number of other projects over many years. (This is, as Blair (2001) has shown, the modus operandi of filmmakers in a project-based market.) I draw upon their situated experiences, examining how this collection of inter-actors made history in circumstances other than their choosing (Crossley, 2010a, p. 5), and placing this examination in dialogue with current debates in the sociology of cultural production: how do these networks of cultural production form? How are they maintained? In the following pages, I first define and broadly outline what relational sociology entails before grounding it within networks and social network analysis. After defining networks, I elaborate on the abstraction of relations into network ties, making a case for the necessity of relational explanations of social life to move between levels of analysis. I then briefly touch upon key sociological debates on structure and agency from the network perspective, before returning to clarify how my thesis is informed as well by Becker and Bourdieu but stops short of accepting their contributions in toto.

Relational sociology has throughout the years been called many things, from structural analysis (Wellman and Berkowitz, 1988) to the anti-categorical imperative (Emirbayer, 1997) to… relational sociology (Crossley, 2010a). Finding its theoretical precursors in the likes of Simmel's (1972) project of a formalistic sociology – "one that directs attention exclusively to the overall structure of network ties while suppressing

consideration of their substantive content" (Emirbayer and Goodwin, 1994, p. 1415) and Mead's (1981) pragmatism, the development of relational sociology has been most closely bound with that of social network analysis (SNA). Emirbayer (1997, p. 298) argues that SNA is the "best developed and most widely used" approach to the analysis of social structures – "a paradigm for the study of how resources, goods, and even positions flow through particular figurations of social ties." Despite its evolution from social anthropology and social psychology (see Prell, 2012, pp. 19–53; Scott, 2000, pp. 7–37 for a treatment of SNA's historical trajectory), for a while from the 70s to the mid-90s it was SNA's roots in graph theory that dominated network discourse. Network analysts prided themselves on a rejection of culture, prompting Emirbayer's (1997, p. 300 – original emphasis) critical statement that "relational approaches to the sociological study of *culture* are not nearly so well developed as those concerned with networks of social relationships." This led to a "cultural turn" in network analysis, whereby social structures and networks came to be seen as inherently cultural (Breiger, 2010 charts this 'cultural turn' in depth). The reconciliation of culture and structure in relational sociology has since led to the development of a number of productive research agendas, most notably through Crossley's (2010a, p. 5) likening of networks to the concept of social worlds: "something broader than what the concept of 'network' might initially suggest." Indeed, this line of research has been championed by the likes of Fuhse (2009), Bellotti (2016, 2014), Crossley (2008a, 2008b, 2009, 2010a, 2010b), Bottero and Crossley (2011); Crossley and Edwards (2016), Edwards (2010) and Mische (2008). This thesis subscribes most closely to Crossley's (2010a, p. 5) above-mentioned conception of networks as akin to social worlds, and while I expand on this subscription below, for now I remain focused on the contours of what relational sociology entails.

Temporally-Unfolding Relations, Relationally-Emerging Agents

Crossley (2010a, p. 28) defines relations as "lived trajectories of iterated interactions" with a "history of past and an expectation of future interaction," which "shapes (…) current interactions." They are "dynamic in nature," "unfolding, ongoing processes" rather than "static ties among inert substances" (Emirbayer 1997, p. 289). Here, it is

important to note how Emirbayer and Mische (1998, p. 969) draw upon Mead's notion of sociality: "the situatedness of actors in multiple temporally evolving relational transactions." We are all inherently embedded in multiple webs of relations – networks; in turn, the networks we are part of are interstitial – they "cut across discrete communities (…) even though in certain cases they may also congeal into bounded groups and clusters" (Emirbayer 1997, p. 299). Such a processual, temporally-bound view of relations has significant implications for core sociological debates on structure and agency. Mische (2011, p. 80) argues that relational thinking "is a way to overcome stale antinomies between structure and agency" while for Crossley (2010a, p. 5) there is no debate to be had: "agency and structure are effectively co-existing aspects of the social world which assume greater or lesser salience in different contexts." To be sure, social structure, according to Crossley (2010a, p. 137), involves conventions, resources and networks. He defines conventions similarly to Becker (1984, p. 29), as "previous agreements now become customary." Resources contribute to structure by virtue of their exchange value (an actor's agency is influenced by how easy or difficult it is to obtain the necessary resources for action), while here networks refer to the web of relations actors are embedded in and which render them interdependent. Structure, it should be noted, both constrains and conduces agency. Crossley (2010a, p. 125) elaborates:

> *"Actors interact in purposive ways, bringing their desires, preferences, intelligence etc. to bear (agency) but they necessarily do so in a context of opportunities and constraints (structure) deriving from (1) their connection to and interdependency with others, in various forms, and the further connection of their alters within a network, (2) the resources they have available to them and (3) the sedimented weight of the past, embodied in conventions, as it bears upon their present."*

This temporally-bound conception of agency bears resemblance with that of Emirbayer and Mische (1998, p. 962). The authors here conceptualise agency as a "temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (…) but also oriented toward the future (…) and toward the present. Both Crossley (2010a) and Emirbayer and Mische (1998) are critical of Bourdieu's and Giddens' conceptions of agency: the former focusing on their 'de-relationalisation' of structure and the latter on the over-emphasis of routine, habitual action in their conception of agency. Indeed, for Emirbayer and Mische (1998, p. 962), habitual, routine action is only one

dimension of agency – the iterational aspect informed by the past. This is complemented by actors' ""projective" capacity to imagine alternative possibilities" and their ""practical evaluative" capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment." Note here that conceptions of both structure and agency in these terms are inherently relational. Structure is always a structure of something (Crossley 2010a, p. 143), while agency is always agency toward something (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, p. 973). Furthermore, Emirbayer and Mische (1998, p. 1004) insist that there are no concrete agents, i.e., agency is not something that actors possess, rather something that emerges out of actor's engagement with the structures around them ("actors engage agentically with their structuring environments"). These conceptualisations are rooted in Mead's (1981) work on the sociality of experience, which dissects consciousness into three planes:

"(1) the level of "contact experience," characterized by immediacy of response to sense and feeling, (2) that of "distant experience," characterized by the capacity to use ideation and imagery in remembrance and anticipation, and finally, (3) the culmination of sociality in communicative interaction, in which social meanings and values develop out of the capacity to take on the perspectives of (concrete and generalized) others" (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, p. 969).

Crossley (2010a, p. 94), meanwhile, grounds these within a sense of self:

"Our sense of self is achieved within a narrative mode (…) Actors build a sense of 'me' through a historical reconstruction of scenes, dramas or sequences of events in which they have been involved, that is, by way of stories in which they are the central protagonist. The me is a character in a story told by the I"

Such a processual, temporally-bound and relationally grounded approach lends itself favourably to studying filmmakers for a number of reasons. Santagata (2010) and Krätke (2002) have outlined the path-dependencies of cultural production, where a 'project' necessarily goes through a number of different phases (from conception to dissemination) in its production. Each of these phases have distinct properties that influence each other: in the pre-production phase, to illustrate, a script is dissected and its constituent parts translated into various shooting day schedules in the form of call sheets, which in turn shape the production (filming) process (cf Emirbayer 1997, p. 290 on "the primacy of contextuality and process in sociological analysis.")

Furthermore, the relational approach, by virtue of its rejection of individual categories, inherently conceptualises cultural production as a collective process (rejecting, in line with Bourdieu and Becker, the notion of a single genius artist). Moreover, as a result of the above-mentioned 'cultural turn', the relational approach also provides room for an exploration of the emergent cultural and meaning aspects of cultural production. Born (2010) and Zolberg (1990), have criticised sociological approaches to cultural production or art, the latter arguing that sociologists' pre-occupation with processes of status creation leads to a reductionism of the artwork itself. This contrasts with relational sociology's refusal to a priori limit the analysis to just individuals[19]. Born (2010, p. 192), meanwhile, argues that in 'ignoring' the aesthetic we also ignore some of the agentic orientations of cultural producers.

Relations as Ties in Networks

The fundamental premise of a relational sociology, in Crossley's (2010a, p. 15) nuanced articulation of it, is that "individuals (…) are formed and continually reformed in and through interaction" (cf Emirbayer 1997, p. 289 – 290; Wellman 1988). To this end, the basic unit of analysis in relational sociology is not individuals, rather the "relations which (…) emerge from them," (Crossley 2010a, p. 10). Individuals, when removed from the multiple webs of relations they are embedded in, are a unit "too basic to capture much that is most significant about the social world" (*ibid*, p. 14)[20]. Borgatti and Lopez-Kiddwell (2011, p. 49) distinguish between realist and nominalist conceptions of networks. Nominalists view networks as metaphors or models, proxies of what passes through nodes (actors), while for realists "networks are defined as a set of interconnected nodes (…) that tend to be a replacement or a variant of the concept of sociological group." These ontological positions also have their methodological implications, particularly in setting network boundaries. Realists treat the network "as a social fact only in that it is consciously experienced as such by the actors composing it" (Emirbayer 1997, p. 304; Scott, 2000, p. 43). Of particular relevance here is Krackhardt's (1987) work, which engages with the varying accuracy of participants' recollection of conscious experience. The author finesseses the realist conception of

[19] I elaborate further upon this below
[20] For an elaboration on the normative implications of such an approach, see Emirbayer (1997, p, 308 – 310).

networks to include cognitive social structures (or cognitive networks), i.e. participants' perception of and attitudes toward networks: "Perceptions are real in their consequences, even if they do not map one-to-one onto observed behaviors" (*ibid*, p. 128). The nominalist approach, meanwhile, uses formal criteria to identify boundaries "of a category that has some analytical significance but may not be a socially organized and recognized group" (*ibid*). Broadly, this thesis subscribes to a realist ontology of networks more conducive to the mixing of methods (Crossley and Edwards 2016) discussed in the next chapter. Participants in this research certainly identify as part of the same 'group,' or 'crew,' or 'dream team,' and while they do not refer to themselves as forming a network per se, it is fair to say that they do consciously experience themselves as part of a network. This thesis is, in a sense, interested in the social world, the emergent properties of networks that, in Crossley's (2010a, p. 5) words, are broader than what the concept of network initially suggests.

Wasserman and Faust (1994) define networks as consisting of a set of actors and the relations or ties that bind them together. Here, actors can be individuals but also organisations, objects, firms or even neural networks (see Brandes et al., (2013) for a breakdown of the use of networks outside the social sciences, and Borgatti et al., (2009) for the use of SNA in the social sciences). Katz et al. (2004, p. 308) distinguish among a variety of ties studied by network analysts. These include communication ties (who talks to whom), affective ties (who likes whom), material or work ties (who pays whom, who reports to whom), proximity ties (who is close to whom), and cognitive ties (who knows whom). Ties can be directional or symmetric (e.g., unreciprocated / reciprocated love), valued (e.g., 'best' friend / 'close' friend), frequency (e.g., daily / sporadic interaction) and signed as positive or negative (e.g., liking / disliking).

The distinction between ties and relations is an important one to make. Katz et al.'s (2004) above distinction among various types of ties refer to the analytic categories in which certain aspects of relations can be placed towards illuminating relevant research questions. In chapter four of this thesis, for instance, I draw upon work ties (who reports to whom) to shed light on how different clients influence the situated, on-set process of production. But the work tie between a camera operator and their assistant, i.e., the assistant's reporting on set to the operator, is one aspect of this relation. Indeed, the two might have had coffee before the start of the shoot and discussed the political climate of the country, for example. The camera assistant might

also phone the operator outside of the set and ask for advice. The above comparison of networks to social worlds, something broader than what 'network' entails, is indicative of this social 'excess'[21] that networks cannot fully portray. Evidently, then, the selection of certain types of ties for analytic purposes does not capture the complexity of actors' situated experience of relations: a partner remains a partner even when a partner is a boss. Even more broadly, these ties are themselves embedded in wider 'networks of networks' of relations encompassing race, class and gender among others. In operationalising networks, then, we are analytically isolating (Crossley 2010a, p. 138 refers to this as abstracting) certain types of relations for explanatory purposes. Emirbayer (1997, p. 303) most accurately describes the underlying disconnect from which the problem of boundary specification arises: "moving from flows of transactions to clearly demarcated units of study, from continuity to discontinuity." While this is primarily a methodological issue discussed in the next chapter, suffice it to say here that this is one of the "unavoidable trade-offs" (Emirbayer 1997, p. 305 – 309) of a relational approach. Emirbayer (1997, p. 307) thus stresses the importance of an "explicit concern for the "situational mechanisms" (Stinchcombe, 1991) that actually channel flows of events." Crossley (2010b), meanwhile, has argued for a mixed-methods approach to social network analysis, stressing the importance of qualitatively understanding the "goings on" (Crossley 2010b, p. 3) in networks. Finally, the notion of multiplexity, that there are multiple 'types' of ties simultaneously at play between social actors, is useful here. Crossley (2010a, p. 138) articulates the point on the movement from social reality to (social network) analysis:

> *"To analyse 'structure' is to abstract from this rather rich social reality. This is an important and often necessary step to take but we should not mistake the abstraction for what it abstracts from and we need concepts which operate at a lower level of abstraction, a more concrete level, if we are to do sociological justice to the relational, social world."*

The above reference to the need for concepts which operate "at a lower level of abstraction" is reminiscent of Zolberg's (1990) call for a focus on middle-level social structures that mediate between subjective experience and broader social processes.

[21] Albertsen and Diken (2004, p. 35) make the point in relation to objects, arguing against the reduction of an artwork to its production network because it "hides an 'excess', an 'intensity' that surpasses the conditions of its production and reception."

The identification of such mediating concepts (Crossley 2010a) or explanatory structures (Zolberg 1990) or "situational mechanisms" (Emirbayer 1997, p. 307) 'lubricates' the necessary movement up and down levels of analysis necessary in producing relational explanations (see Kadushin, 1995, p. 205). Here I discuss briefly some of the mediating concepts I draw upon in my analytic chapters below, before engaging in a discussion of Becker and Bourdieu as they relate to relational sociology via networks and, in turn, my thesis.

Social Network Markets, Bridges and the Notion of Equivalence

In chapter four, on production and patronage, I discuss the limitations of current systems of classification of the visual arts. Here, my research confirmed to me a critique levelled at these systems by Potts et al. (2008) that they are too narrowly focused on consumption. To illustrate briefly, current systems of classification distinguish between film production and advertising on the basis that one is consumed in theatres and the other through television. This distinction between the two does not apply in the working lives of film producers, though, as alluded to by Christopherson (2008) and Blair (2001) when discussing movement between industries. Indeed, when a filmmaker or a network of filmmakers produces a short film one week and a television advert the other, they are not 'moving between industries' as current classificatory systems would suggest: they are producing moving images in both cases and following the same pattern of work; it is only the works that are disseminated across different pathways. Their production always necessarily follows the process outlined by Santagata (2010) and Krätke (2002). Potts et al.'s (2008) notion of social network markets provides a more precise and accurate conceptual tool through which to approach the working lives of production networks by focusing more on those who commission production as opposed to what the production is aimed at. This allows for a closer demonstration of the subtle, nuanced micro-level changes in how the work gets done by offloading consumption-based classification onto those commissioning the work as opposed to those producing it.

Still rooted in networks, Kadushin (1976) discusses how production networks 'drape around' the more formal structures and institutions that commission them and take on some of their structural properties. Informed by Potts et al. (2008) and Kadushin (1976), then, I demonstrate by using formal network methods how the structure of

the production process changes, across its different phases, as a result of the activation of patronage ties with different 'formal' institutions and structures. Here, I draw upon the network concept of equivalence, first identified by Lorrain and White (1971) and subsequently developed by Breiger et al. (1975) and Burt (1976). Equivalence is based on the principle that if two nodes in a network have similar patterns (number and structure) of relationships, then they occupy equivalent positions and play similar social roles in the network (Hanneman and Riddle, 2005). I identify subtle differences in the structure and hierarchy of production as a function of the varying levels of control different clients like to exert on set. Such an approach contributes to social scientific understandings of the freelance careers of film production network members and provides empirical texture to the work of Christopherson and Storper (1989; Storper and Christopherson, 1987) on the flexible specialization of freelancers in film. Further, it contributes to the corpus of work on repeat collaborations between freelancers, championed first by Becker (1984), Faulkner and Anderson (1987) and developed later by network analysts such as Cattani et al. (2008), Cattani and Ferriani, (2008) and Ferriani et al., (2007, 2013). Such an approach synergises with and contributes to Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) conception of agency discussed above: in identifying the structural positions (through equivalence) of network members, we are better able to understand their agentic orientations. The repeat collaborations among successful filmmakers are "linked intrinsically to the changing temporal orientations" of these situated actors (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, p. 967) through the past (success of past collaboration) and the future (the opportunities afforded by these successful past collaboration).

Objects and Two-Mode Networks

The network approach also allows new questions to be asked of the ongoing debate around cultural objects and the role they play in social life. In chapter five, on objects, I draw upon social network analysis more ethnographically, interrogating the role films and projects (as cultural objects) played in instigating a 'change' in network structure over two time-periods. Here, I lever Jones' (1996) argument that in freelance careers it is projects, and not firms, that should be considered the primary organizer of work. Indeed, such an exercise calls into question not only the situated organization of work by projects (the makeup of music video production crews, for example, differs greatly

to that of ads) but also extends this line of enquiry into the consumption of projects. Do projects 'work' on their producers much longer after they have been produced? Does the consumption of cultural objects such as films in turn produce the producers of the film? In other words, I explore the ways in which cultural objects influence or shape relationships between production network members, relationships with members of other production networks, and - by way of their consumption - relationships between production networks and the markets they are embedded in.

Moreover, I benefit from the greater ontological compatibility of social network analysis to traditional cultural sociology in comparison to actor-network theory (Mutzel, 2009) to place in dialogue theories of mediation (Born, 2015b; DeNora, 1986; Hennion, 2002) with Zolberg's (1990) commentary on the state of cultural sociological debate. Mutzel (2009), to be sure, argues that while objects participate in social life in both SNA and ANT, in the former it is only humans who can tell stories[22]. This versatility of SNA, then, its compatibility with both object-oriented and more traditional sociological approaches, allows me to explore the extent to which films participate in their makers' lives and place this exploration in dialogue with more traditional explanations of filmmakers too. Schultz and Breiger (2010, p. 624), for instance, have argued that "one's relationships with cultural objects and one's relations with other persons have much in common". Here, I draw upon two-mode networks (see Borgatti and Everett, 1997) and Breiger's (1976) notion of the duality of persons and groups, interpreted by DiMaggio (2011, p. 290) as "the recognition that each mode in a two-mode network constitutes the identity of the other." I explore Zolberg's (1990) critique that sociology's focus on processes of status creation unfairly portray art as the mere byproduct of these processes. Retaining and grounding this focus in networks, I reflect upon the extent to which objects can be said to participate in processes of status creation. These questions indeed further nuance the above-introduced understandings of networked, freelance film careers and possibly begin to make the case for networks as the "middle level societal structures" (Zolberg 1990, p. 213) that relate producer agency and subjective experience to objective structures and social processes

[22] I engage more closely with this in chapter five, to be sure.

Relationships, Embeddedness and Multiplexity

In the final analytic chapter of this thesis I draw most heavily upon the network notion of embeddedness, that "economic action is embedded in social relations which sometimes facilitate and at other times derail exchange" (Granovetter, 1985; Uzzi, 1996, p. 674). I cast an ethnographic gaze over the social relationships among network members and investigate some of the emergent properties of these more-or-less durable relationships. The last Shankaboot episode aired in 2011, after all, and some members of the production network still produce together to this day, maintaining complex friendships, life partnerships, rivalries and mentorships. Grounding these relationships in networks, operationalised by the repeat collaboration of the same crewmembers on a number of different projects over the years, I draw upon my ethnographic data to empirically construct the social relationships these repeat economic collaborations are situated in. Here I am heavily informed by Crossley's (2010a) relational sociology, emphasising how we construct ourselves in relation to others by narrativising shared situated experience. In the first instance, this challenges the reductionism identified by Strandvad (2010) of viewing creative work in terms of self-creation, shedding a light on more micro-level factors such as the pleasure one derives from playing with cameras.

Furthermore, a focus on the emergence of shared narratives allows to broach moments of culture-in-action, where further meaning is given to seemingly purely economic relationships. Here I am informed by Acord and DeNora's (2008) project of better understanding how 'worlds' are 'built': the emergence of special characteristics that lead us to call a collection of people a 'world' or, in Bourdieu's terms, the affirmation and definition of the position-taking of the 'new' whose interest is to challenge current consecrated actors in the (sub)field of cultural production. Identifying, for instance, expressions of the "National Produce" aesthetic in everyday life offers opportunities for cautious reflection on the social and political reaches of culture: how the social, cultural and political characteristics of our relationships shape our situated experience and sense of (networked) self.

Taken in aggregation, the aim here is to shed light on some of the emergent cultural properties of these multiple intersecting webs of relationships. How patronage ties contribute to the formation and maintenance of production networks; how the objects

produced in these networks influence their formation and maintenance; and, finally, how the durability or maintenance of these networks by way of their relationships ('iterated interactions') give rise to emergent cultural properties that transcend the 'economic' (work) plane into the cultural (aesthetic) and, in turn, how the cultural plane 'spills over' into the everyday social and political lives of network members.

In each case, levering these mediating relational concepts (of social network markets, the mediation of objects, embeddedness and shared narratives) conduces analysis. In the first instance, they ground the analysis in particular levels and then facilitate a movement across them. There are, of course, limitations within the relational approach, and I discuss these in greater detail below. First, though, I continue to make the case for networks, placing the perspective in dialogue with Becker and Bourdieu who themselves identify as relationalists to varying extents. While Becker's relationality is founded upon symbolic interactionism, Bourdieu's is a structuralist version. Bottero and Crossley (2011, p. 100), however, are critical of their "insufficiently worked-out conception of social ties and the networks they form." In this coming section I discuss Bottero and Crossley's (2011) critique of Becker and Bourdieu but also engage with each of them individually. The aim here is to elaborate upon the specific reasons why, in spite of Bottero and Crossley's (2011) networked grounding of Becker and Bourdieu, my thesis remains partially informed by their work as opposed to adopting in toto either of their theoretical frameworks.

Bourdieu and SNA: Epistemic vs. Empirical Relationalities

Bourdieu's contribution to the sociology of cultural production cannot be understated. Hesmondhalgh (2006, p. 217) praises Bourdieu's systematic emphasis on interconnectedness and power, arguing that his theorizations on "structure and action in cultural production as part of a comprehensive social theory" are superior to "the huge corpus of pluralist sociology of culture." In North American sociology, DiMaggio (1979, p. 1463) is also effusive of field theory's illumination of hierarchy and conflict "at the base of even ostensibly neutral cultural enterprises." Bourdieu certainly defined the terms of cultural sociological debate in the decades since his work on cultural

production was translated to English as papers and two essay collections[23], with Becker's[24] (1984) Art Worlds often providing the intellectual opposition. According to Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1998b) himself, there are two fundamental characteristics to his work: its relationality ("in that it accords primacy to relations" (*ibid*, p. vii) and its being a dispositional philosophy of action (noting "the potentialities inscribed in the body of agents and in the structure of the situations where they act or, more precisely, in the relations between them" (*ibid*)). In what follows, I briefly engage with the terms of Bourdieu's epistemic relationality, placing it in dialogue with SNA's more empirical approach to it. I then move on to another relevant criticism of Bourdieu's work in relation to what Hesmondhalgh (2006) identifies as the recent rise of the cultural industries. I end this section with a final synthesis of why, as mentioned above, this thesis subscribes to Crossley's (2010a) empirical, over Bourdieu's epistemic, relational sociology.

Mohr (2013, p. 101) argues that "a key tenet of Bourdieu's relationalism is that objects under investigation are seen in context, as part of a whole." In the first instance, this is certainly compatible with the relational sociology I've outlined above: "Nothing can be properly understood in isolation or in a segmented fashion" (Wellman, 1983 in Katz et al., 2004, p. 312). However, it is in his operationalisation of this relationality that Bourdieu differs from network scholars. Mohr (2013, pp. 101 – 102) continues: The meaningfulness of these objects under investigation "is determined not by the characteristic properties, attributes, or essences of the thing itself, but rather with reference to the field of objects, practices, or activities within which they are embedded." So Bourdieu's epistemic relationality is founded upon objective relations within fields, as opposed to empirical relationships between actors. Mohr (2013, p. 111) elaborates on fields:

> *"Every field is a site within which some type of capital operates and, thus, each field includes a fundamental metric according to which any given individual (or group or profession, or class fraction) can be assessed vis-à-vis others according to their relative position within the field, which is a reflection of their levels of possession of field-specific capital."*

[23] Here I also engage with his 1998 work, Practical Reason (Bourdieu, 1998b)
[24] More on him below

Similarly, Bottero and Crossley (2011, p. 101) shed light on the rupture between SNA's empirical, and Bourdieu's epistemic, relationality:

> *"If individuals occupy the same social space for Bourdieu this is not in virtue of their social relationships with each other but because they share similar structural relations to economic and cultural resources. (…) Relation in this context does not refer to a tie or anything that passes between positions. It refers to similarities / differences in position. One's 'objective relation' to another is one's proximity to them in social space, as Bourdieu defines that space."*

What Mohr (2011, p. 112) takes issue with most in Bourdieu's field-grounded relationality is its linearity, the sense that "the field is entirely driven by the logic of the macro-level struggle over the defining dimensions of this space. It is one's orientation toward the dominant culture and one's struggle to locate oneself within their system of discourse that is seen to be relevant." Mohr's critique is helpful here in that it articulates the directionality of Bourdieu's relationality, moving from macro-level forces to micro-level practices and interactions. This is evidenced further when Bottero and Crossley (2011, p. 101) discuss Bourdieu's rejection of network analysis and symbolic interactionism: "he claims, they do not distinguish objective relations from social relationships and mistake effects for causes, neglecting the underlying forces (objective relations) which generate empirical social relationships." The authors also cite Bourdieu (in Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, pp. 113–114), stating that the structure of the field "is different from the more or less lasting networks through which it manifests itself."

In the context of this thesis, the main argument as to why I find myself closer to Crossley's (2010a) empirical relationality over Bourdieu's (1993) epistemic one lies somewhere in between Mohr's (2013) critique (that in fact synergises well with Hesmondhalgh's (2006) contribution to the debate) and the macro-to-micro directionality of Bourdieu's structuralism. As I turn to Hesmondhalgh (2006) now, it is important to retain Mohr's (2013) unease with the primacy of a single, field-specific, macro-level struggle that underlies Bourdieu's relationality. In evaluating "Bourdieu's analysis of cultural production in terms of its effectiveness for understanding contemporary media production" (Hesmondhalgh 2006, p. 211), Hesmondhalgh (*ibid*, p. 217 – 218) is critical:

"It is simply astonishing how little Bourdieu has to say about large-scale, 'heteronomous' commercial cultural production, given not only its enormous social and cultural importance in the contemporary world, but also its significance in determining conditions in the sub-field in which he is clearly much more interested, restricted production. The result is that Bourdieu offers no account of how the most widely consumed cultural products – those disseminated by the media – are produced"

The author identifies a number of shortcomings stemming from this under-elaboration of goings on in the sub-field of large-scale cultural production, particularly in light of the (accelerated) rise of the cultural industries in the decades since Bourdieu's work was published, and its implications on "the changing social relations of cultural producers" (Hesmondhalgh 2006: 220). He (*ibid*, p. 222) rightly points to (recent) relational dynamics in the cultural industries, alluded to in Blair's (2001, p. 161) work, of producers (individuals representing production companies large and small, multi-national and local) "buying in bulk" freelance cultural workers towards the production of a particular project, as one of the key consequential shortcomings of Bourdieu's lack of attention to large-scale production. The author also refers to his own work that sheds light on how a lot of the content disseminated through mass media (i.e. large-scale cultural production) is in fact produced by, or in partnership or cooptation with, more independent agents that one would place in the sub-field of small-scale cultural production (Hesmondhalgh, 1996, 2006, p. 222). There is an underlying question here pertaining to the difficulty and complexity in 'placing' agents in Bourdieu's positions and fields in light of the rise of the cultural industries that Hesmondhalgh (2006, p. 221) asks: "What – many of us wanted to ask – about the rest of television, outside journalism, across its many genres, including documentary, drama, comedy, 'light entertainment', reality television? What about its contradictions and hybrid forms, its extraordinary strangeness?"

It seems to me that Hesmondhalgh's (2006) underlying critique of Bourdieu is founded upon the recent 'mixing' or hybridization of different fields of cultural production: how do these different fields of cultural production influence each other? Bourdieu (1998a, pp. 36 - 37) comes closest to addressing this in his work on television, where he discusses the influence of television on all other forms of cultural production:

"The most important development, and a difficult one to foresee, was the extraordinary extension of the power of television over the whole of cultural production, including

scientific and artistic production. Today, television has carried to the extreme, to the very limit, a contradiction that haunts every sphere of cultural production. I am referring to the contradiction between the economic and social conditions necessary to produce a certain type of work and the social conditions of transmission for the products obtained under these conditions."

There is an allusion to hybridisation here: television's market-driven logics interpenetrate other fields of cultural production, pulling them towards heteronomy (Bourdieu, 1998a). Still, though, for Bourdieu television remains its own field, separate from that of short films, web-series, cinema and other types of visual cultural production. But, as one case with which I engage in chapter four illustrates, television nowadays is disseminated through other platforms as well, like the internet, building 'buzz' (Powers, 2014) and creating an ecosystem for its products. In this vein, Hesmondhaglh (2006, p. 220) raises a point of contention on ownership, stating that Bourdieu has left completely unexplored "the domination of cultural production by multinational entertainment corporations across all cultural industries" and the development of cultural production into "the cutting edge of global business" (*ibid*). But again, while Bourdieu does not explicitly address the issue of ownership, he does, in his work on television, discuss the increasing ubiquity of heteronomous, ratings-driven logics in different fields of cultural production (coming from television journalism). Precisely, he argues:

"Journalists – we should really say the journalistic field – owe their importance in society to their de facto monopoly on the large-scale informational instruments of production and diffusion of information. Through these, they control the access of ordinary citizens but also of other cultural producers such as scholars, artists, and writers, to what is sometimes called "public space," that is, the space of mass circulation" (Bourdieu 1998a, p. 46)

Now, while Hesmondhalgh's (2006) critique remains relevant in that Bourdieu (1998a) does not explicitly address the issues raised, it is clear that there is an implicit macro-level appreciation of these forces, particularly in Bourdieu's (1998a) work on television. The problem, in the context of this thesis, goes back to directionality: while Bourdieu (1998a) implicitly addresses macro-level dynamics (how television influences other fields of cultural production) it is unclear how these would be translated to the micro-level. A useful illustration here, and a gradual anchoring of the discussion in the empirical context, would be thinking of Shankaboot, the first Arabic-language web-

series produced in 2009. Funded by the BBC on the one hand and produced by Batoota Films, a small-scale production house that hired Lebanese freelancers on the other, Shankaboot arguably embodied both autonomous and heteronomous logics of production. As I discuss more closely in the analytic chapters ahead, Shankaboot was 'autonomous' in its establishment of a new type of realist aesthetic but also heteronomous in its close plot supervision aimed at keeping the story accessible to multinational Arab 'masses'. It is also worth briefly mentioning here that Shankaboot's highest viewership came from Saudi Arabia and Egypt and not Lebanon, where the series was produced. A deeper engagement with these critiques returns us to Hesmondhalgh's (2006, p. 222) observations on the complexity of the cultural industries today: the extent to which the work of the network of freelance cultural producers fit into Bourdieu's field positions is highly contentious. Even if such field positions are established, for example of cinema being placed at the interstice of autonomous and heteronomous sub-fields and web-series towards the heteronomous end of the sub-field of autonomous cultural production, the movement of actors (the network of film producers this thesis follows) from one field to the next[25] would be difficult to account for in Bourdieusian terms. Hesmondhalgh (2006, p. 222) expertly captures the issues that arise between Bourdieu and the cultural industries:

> *"The division between large-scale and restricted production continues to make sense as at least an initial organizing principle for thinking about the making of culture, but in many fields, such as popular music, we are seeing a proliferation of sub-fields of restricted production, alongside the growth of large-scale production, as the field of cultural production as a whole grows larger and more complex. One way of putting this is that there is now a huge amount of cultural production taking place on the boundaries between sub-fields of mass and restricted production; or, perhaps better still, that restricted production has become introduced into the field of mass production."*

Relating this discussion back to Mohr's (2013) critique, in light of the increasing complexity of fields of cultural production (shown by Hesmondhalgh's above quote), it becomes increasingly difficult to identify what the 'dominant culture' is, especially on the micro-level. The Shankaboot case is illustrative again here. Shankaboot certainly remains the dominant web-series in Beirut, but the fact that it is a web-series blurs the

[25] A movement between fields, i.e. cinema to web-series to advertising, as opposed to a movement between positions in the same field.

boundaries of autonomy / heteronomy: on the one hand it can be defined as heteronomous, due to its accrual of the most views among all web-series produced in Lebanon so far, but on the other hand the fact that it was disseminated on YouTube and not television makes it an autonomous cultural product, produced in opposition to market-driven television series. Furthermore, the people who produced Shankaboot were some of the most influential in their own fields of advertising, cinema and so on.

The terms according to which Bottero and Crossley (2011) on the one hand, and Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1998b) on the other, define relationality are precisely what renders their two approaches ultimately incompatible. Atkinson (2012, p. 172), in his review of a number of critiques of Bourdieu, including Crossley's (2010a), helpfully mentions a shift from epistemic to empirical individuals: Bourdieu's relationality is epistemic, relating agents together on the basis of their proximity to resources (i.e., their structural positions in the field). Taken in this sense, interactions among agents are effects of this relationality – part and parcel of the game, the illusion. Bourdieu's argument is that empirical interactions might well be deceptive of epistemic relations, much like people on opposing sides of a television debate seem to be on opposite sides but are in fact "cronies" (Bourdieu 1998a, p. 30). The key epistemological discrepancy between the two comes to the fore here: while for Bottero and Crossley (2011) relations are best studied empirically through people's interactions, for Bourdieu they are best studied by first abstracting individuals' differential access to key resources (volume and composition of capitals) and then identifying their shared interest as a function of this access. Consecrated actors, for instance, will always support each other, according to Bourdieu, even if they seem to be at odds. This might, at first sight, seem to be an iteration of the structuralist vs symbolic interactionist debate, but their disagreements are more nuanced than that. Indeed, these disagreements crystallize on how differently they define structure: Bottero and Crossley do so on empirical grounds, Bourdieu on epistemic grounds. In the context of my own thesis, to conclude this discussion, Bourdieu's epistemic relationality – through macro level power relations – seems to be too blunt an instrument (not to mention built on rather shaky ground, in light of the increasing complexity of the cultural industries that Hesmondhalgh (2006) refers to) with which to analyse the formation and maintenance of networks of cultural production in Beirut. Brailly et al.'s (2016, p. 319) argument that our behaviour is not "entirely defined by macro-

structures," while not made in relation to Bourdieu, perhaps captures the essence of the argument here. The closest my thesis comes to a Bourdieusian analysis is in chapter six, where I discuss the complicated personal relationships between key actors in the network under study, but I arrive at these epistemic relations from their empirical manifestations and not – as Bourdieu would have had it – the other way around.

Becker: Structures and Optimism

For symbolic interactionist Becker (1984), artistic production is founded upon the collective action of chains of agents (scriptwriter, production assistant, location manager, etc.) whose collaboration is facilitated by conventions and conventional divisions of labour. Here, art is a process of collective action (Becker, 1974) – collaboration through convention – between different 'types' of artists (Becker, 1976) in a given art world, their surrounding support personnel, the resources this network accrues. Bottero and Crossley (2011, p. 106) aptly summarise the criticisms directed at Becker by highlighting his reticence to discuss social structure and his suspicion of the concept. They argue this is because he "wants to avoid imbuing networks [that constitute art worlds] with a misplaced solidity" (*ibid*). Pessin (Becker and Pessin, 2006, p. 275) is critical of the consequences of this under-theorisation: he laments how the theory of art worlds is "sometimes purely and simply denied its specificity when it is finally turned into a more optimistic variant" of Bourdieu's fields. Despite symbolic interactionist Becker's and structuralist Bourdieu's epistemological incompatibilities, there remains a sense of complementarity among the two. Both camps are highly critical of such misguided attempts, however: "sprinkling a little Becker on Bourdieu," according to Pessin (Becker and Pessin 2006, p. 275) is "too simple minded" and insufficiently rigorous. Becker's response to allegations of optimism, however, does little to rebut them. In the first instance, though, it is worth discussing how he rightly points out that his focus on observable interaction does not a priori discount conflict, establishing the parallel with Bourdieu on under-theorisation:

> *"Collective action - two or more (usually a lot more) people doing something together - is not the same as cooperating in the more conventional, minimal understanding of that word, which has overtones of peacefulness, getting along with one another, and good will. On the*

contrary, the people engaged in collective action might be fighting or plotting one another or doing any of the other things that figure so prominently in Bourdieu's descriptions of social life" (Becker and Pessin 2006, p. 283)

But Becker also tacitly concedes the point that his sociology is a rather optimistic one in his defense of art worlds. He admits that while people "are free to try to find other possibilities, those possibilities are limited by what they can force or persuade other people to do." (Becker and Pessin 2006, p. 281). On the back of this point, he admits that his approach emphasizes openness and possibility, leaving the "substantial regularity" of social life in need of regular explanation (*ibid*). Conflict and constraint, then, seem to be empirical foci to be broached through researching the repeat interactions of art world participants. Yet there remains a sense that Becker over-emphasizes freedom, and his discussion of North-American versus European sociology sheds an explanatory light onto this over-emphasis. He explains that one consequence of the sheer scale of American sociology (twenty times more people and departments in the United States compared to France) is that "it is relatively easy to support a wide variety of sociological activities" (Becker and Pessin 2006, p. 279). He then goes on to give the example of the formation of the International Visual Sociology Association, formed as its own association after not being able to gather enough numbers to organize a section of the American Sociological Association. "It's in that sort of setting that the idea of world seems like a "natural" way to think about organized activity," (*ibid*) he states.

This emphasis on openness and possibility runs through Becker's work and at times threatens to derail the specific, not generalisable, sociology he champions, particularly in contexts that are not as large or similarly configured as the United States. It is worth making the point here that Lebanon was under a French mandate until 1943, and that Lebanese state institutions are as such modelled after French institutions. Khatib (2008), for example, discusses particularly how the Lebanese Ministry of Culture and its funding of Lebanese cinema is almost a carbon copy of the French system. Becker's suspicious stance towards social structure, pinpointed with reference to Bottero and Crossley (2011) above, and his relegation of "organizations or systems" to "the people whose collective actions constitute the organization or system" (Becker, 1974, p. 767) seem to a priori impose a freer, more voluntarist orientation to social life than is often the case. In the final analytic chapter of this thesis I discuss the significance of a scene

in a web-series where two protagonists, ex-lovers, re-confront the reasons why their relationship ended: their different sectarian backgrounds. Without pre-empting the analysis, suffice it to say that this is an observable and specific (in Becker's words) phenomenon in Lebanon that Becker's framework would offer a rather fragile explanation of. Indeed, one cannot refute that this constraining system (the relationship having to end) is constituted by the collective action (reinforcement) of large sections of Lebanese society. By that same token, though, one cannot refute that explaining sectarianism in these terms unfairly etches away at the power it exerts over people; it leads one to wonder why such a system is left unchallenged without recognising the difficulty (the "price" in Becker's (1974, p. 770) terms), constraints and dangers associated with doing so. His reference to "dissident intellectual movements" in totalitarian regimes (Becker and Pessin 2006, p. 280) smacks of such misrecognition and inaccuracy where people often end up being killed for their dissidence.

Of more relevance to this thesis is his insistence that "if the materials and equipment you want or need have not been manufactured by anyone for any purpose, you can still make them yourself" (Becker 1984, p. 73). This conjures Hesmondhalgh's (2006) criticism of Bourdieu on the grounds of the rise of the cultural industries: it is indeed possible for a photographer to develop their own film, but not so much to develop cameras that have the same dynamic range as the human eye - no matter how much whichever artists wanted to do so. A more nuanced take on artists making things themselves, primarily located in the sociology of music, is Bennett's (Bennett, 2005, pp. 156 - 159, 2004, pp. 73–102; Bennett and Rogers, 2016) work on DIY tourism and raves (see also Chrysagis, 2014; McKay, 1998) in which there is an implicit recognition of the limits of DIY. In short, and returning to Becker, explaining such observable but invisible and powerful social structures as mere collective action and interaction contradicts Becker's promotion of specificity over generalisability: it makes such structures seem less heavy - easier to challenge than they actually are.

Networks and Limitations

To the extent that a Bourdieusian sociology of Shankaboot in toto would constitute on some levels fitting a round peg into a square whole, and a Beckerian interactionist sociology would at times forcibly discount the weight of the world on the shoulders of

my participants, a networked framework intuitively seems more conducive to loyal and grounded explanations of the situated experience of my research particiapnts. From the get-go, networks seemed just to 'fit' with an analysis of the freelance production of films. The people who produced Shankaboot and who I was so fascinated by were all freelancers, they moved in and out of projects, conflicts, friendships, intimate relationships and production crews all while producing this series. This resonated with the move from bounded groups to more porous and malleable networks (Rainie and Wellman, 2012, pp. 21–59). While I worked at Shankaboot and later in the film industry, I noticed that the configuration, intensity and spirit of people's interactions would be shaped by the projects they were involved in: writers and script consultants would lock themselves in eerily silent rooms for hours on end during the conception phase of new seasons, producers, production managers and assistants would flood the office in panic, stress and official documents (such as permits to film in particular areas of Beirut) during pre-production, the assistant director would exert their authority on the life of the office a couple of weeks before production began, and somehow everyone (around 50 people) would then seamlessly move to the set and achieve the at times unthinkably complex tasks of translating the textual script to visual bliss.

The fluid and porous makeup of the groups of people who congregated to work on something specific, and then re-congregated a few weeks later with all other groups of people previously working on something specific, only this time to actually produce what the work of yet another group of people would make into 12 five-minute episodes lends itself readily to a networked approach. This cyclical activation, de-activation and then re-activation of professional relationships pivoted on different film projects synergises well with the duality of structure and agency discussed above: the more crewmembers work on ads, for example, the more ads become part of their identity ("I mostly do ads"). Yet, "paradoxically (for a mode of study so intently focused upon processuality)," as Emirbayer (1997, p. 305) states, "relational sociology has the greatest difficulty in analysing, not the structural features of static networks (…) but rather, the dynamic processes that transform those (network) matrices of transactions." Analyses of networks, through matrices and network diagrams, are free-frames or snapshots of social life - abstracted as such with the aim of explaining some of their properties. Still, this seems to be a 'good' problem to have, as Abbot (1997, p. 98 in Emirbayer 1997, p. 305) argues: It is possible to explain reproduction as a

phenomenon sometimes produced by perpetual change; it is not possible to explain change as a phenomenon sometimes produced by perpetual stasis." Emirbayer (*ibid*) points to the work of Burt (1992) on structural autonomy[26] – "the capacity to exploit entrepreneurially whatever information and control benefits a network affords" (Emirbayer (1997, p. 305) – as providing an exemplary relational / structural account of change in networks.

Emirbayer (1997, p. 305) is critical of White et al.'s (1976) privileging of "spatiality (or topological location) over temporality and narrative unfolding."[27] A closer reading of his criticism, though, leads one to save the baby from being thrown out with the bathwater. Emirbayer (*ibid*) describes White et al.'s (1976) paper as providing "no more than a mere succession of static representations (or "snapshots") of social structure, but it is not the succession of static representations he takes most issue with, rather their privileging of spatiality over temporality and narrative unfolding. The point to take here is that the network dynamics problem he identifies can indeed be solved by a succession of static representations, as long as these structural changes are accounted for with reference to temporality and narrative unfolding. Crossley and Edwards (2016) make a similar point in their promotion of MMSNA, but for the time being suffice it to note that SNA's inability to portray dynamic networks (despite the recent development of dynamic network models that Emirbayer (1997) remains sceptical of) can be circumvented by drawing upon particular methodologies. To reiterate, the main issue here is not SNA's inability to portray dynamic networks, rather the privileging of structural, static explanations over processuality and temporality: "Social actors' reflexive engagement with the problems confronting them in their everyday lives remains significantly undertheorized in recent studies of network processes." In the case of my thesis, I believe this is less of a stumbling block than it was around the time of Emirbayer's (1997) paper's publication. The relational sociology Crossley (2010a) articulates is itself more attentive to processes and temporalities (for instance, through his reference to an unfolding, storied sense of self

[26] I draw specifically upon Burt's (1997, 2004) work on structural holes in the chapter on Production and Patronage.

[27] Emirbayer (1997), to be sure, was referring to a paper in which White et al. (1976) were quantitatively extracting (through blockmodeling, the same umbrella of techniques from which the notion of equivalence was developed) role-based social structures from five case studies involving 15 different time periods. The former was being critical of the latter's under-theorisation of time.

as outlined above). Furthermore, the methodological contributions of Crossley (2010b), Crossley and Edwards (2016) and Bellotti (2016; 2014) provide robust pathways to balance between structural (quantitative) and processual (qualitative) explanations.

Both problems of network boundary specification and network dynamics cannot be completely dealt with in conceptual terms. While I hope to have sufficiently broached their conceptual aspects, these 'problems' can only be robustly dealt with by 'leading' our research methods to serve these "theoretical masters" (Crossley and Edwards 2016, 1.2). A conceptual consideration of the limitations of relational analysis therefore provides a fitting segue into the next chapter on methodology. First, though, a necessary recap of the relational perspective this thesis subscribes to in explaining the formation and maintenance of networks of film production in Beirut.

Conclusion

We cannot make films on our own. In fact, even independent filmmakers (Cheng, 2007) or the notion of the "total filmmaker" (Knudsen, 2016), both referring to the recent rise of 'one-person crews,' depend on the filmmaker's interaction with a multiplicity of technological objects (camera, sound recorder, editing computer, etc.) and the environment (framing and composing a scene in a particular way). While classical theories of cultural production, most notably those of Becker and Bourdieu, counter the notion of a single genius artist, their conception of social ties and relationships has been criticised (Bottero and Crossley 2011). Moreover, they fail to incorporate the necessary interaction with and relation to objects (be they works of art like films or non-human objects like call sheets) – or make sufficient analytic room for their serious incorporation[28]. Bourdieu (1993) references objects in his notion of objectified cultural capital, but does not relate this to processes of cultural production – even his work on dominant modes of consumption of art works pay little attention to these objects. Becker (1984), meanwhile, speaks of the reputation of objects but glosses over their role in the collective action of art production. In fact, his statement that "if the materials and equipment you want or need have not been manufactured

[28] Becker's (1984, pp. 351 – 371) discussion of the reputation of art works is a step in this direction but does not incorporate other important objects, like call sheets.

by anyone for any purpose, you can still make them yourself" (Becker 1984, p. 73) is indicative enough of his reduction of the role of objects. No matter how much we wanted to create a camera or film that completely mimics our eyes' perception of what's in front of us, we can't. Furthermore, they are both guilty of what Zolberg (1990) has identified as the unfair reduction of art works (and by extension the agency of their producers) to by-products of social processes of distinction or status creation.

We are not just filmmakers either. Outside of our filmmaking jobs we are family members, friends, partners and rivals. Those people to whom we are these things might also be filmmakers, or they might not. We are also citizens on whom the decisions of our political representatives have great influence, as evidenced by the cancellation of a shooting day I ethnographed in 2013, due to the security situation. "Go home to your families," was the message that day. Families and the multiple other webs of relationships filmmakers are embedded in, both in the film world and outside of it, influence and shape our lives as filmmakers, family members, friends, etc… When a camera assistant and operator agree to call each other for future jobs after meeting on set, their agreement is based not only on the assistant's good assistantship or the operator's good operating but also, perhaps, on the fact that they get along. It is commonly known that by the end of the production phase of feature-length films, most crewmembers will have slept with each other. They certainly do not choose their sexual partners on the back of the professional ties that bind them.

A research project that aims to understand how networks of film production are formed and maintained must therefore be mindful of not only the contingencies, particularities and complexities of filmmaking careers, but also the webs of relationships these careers are embedded in. In this chapter I have made the case for a relational sociology of networks of film production, arguing that its focus on temporally-bound relations and processes is most conducive to a textured understanding and explanation of how they form and how they are maintained. Specifically, I have made the case for a realist relational paradigm that concedes that in order to explain the social world we necessarily abstract it and simplify it. Drawing upon Crossley (2010a), Emirbayer (1997), Emirbayer and Mische (1998), and Mische (2011), I have argued that the best way to abstract these relations is through mixed-method social network analysis.

I have relied upon Crossley's (2010a, p. 28) definition of relationships as "lived trajectories of iterated interactions" with a "history of past and an expectation of future interaction" which "shapes (…) current interactions." Also in line with Crossley (2010a, p. 5) I have defined networks as "something akin to social worlds," hiding a social excess that abstracted operationalisations of networks cannot capture. More concretely, I have drawn upon Wasserman and Faust's (1994) definition of networks as consisting of a set of actors and the relations or ties that bind them together and discussed some of the "unavoidable trade-offs in attendant "problems"" (Emirbayer 1997, p. 305) underlying the relational approach. More closely relating this thesis to its thematic roots of cultural production, I have discussed the ways in which Becker and Bourdieu inform this thesis but provided hopefully sufficient explanations for why I have not adopted their approaches (even when 'relationalised' by Crossley and Bottero (2011)). I have also discussed some of the mediating relational concepts that I draw upon, such as Potts et al.'s (2008) social network markets, Breiger's (1976) notion of the duality of persons and groups, and the notion of multiplexity, to explain the evolution (maintenance) of the network, and the interaction of these concepts leading to emergent cultural properties within the network. My discussion of the limitations of the relational approach has admittedly been curtailed by the focus on this chapter on theory. In the pages below, I continue this discussion in more methodological terms, elaborating on the methodology of mixed-methods social network analysis as it applies to my thesis.

Methodology: Ethnographing Films and Friendships

This study can be best described as an 'insider' ethnographic case study of networks of film production in Beirut. Naples (1996, p. 46) defines insider research as the study of the people to whom one belongs (and therefore has prior knowledge of), while according to Yin (2002, p. 13) a case study is an "empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident." The overarching research question this thesis aims to unpack is “how are networks of film production formed and maintained in Beirut?” In the pages below, I first provide an overview of the research process, discussing the dialogic emergence of three analytic foci to be addressed. Then, having made explicit the research objectives underlying each of the above-mentioned foci, I discuss the ways in which a mixed-methods social network analytic (MMSNA) methodology ‘serves’ the above identified objectives (Crossley and Edwards 2015, 1.2). I then put these in dialogue with the limitations identified by Emirbayer (1997, pp. 303 – 310) of adopting the relational approach. I end the chapter with a consideration of particularities in relation to my qualitative data collection: my deep sense of belonging to my participants.

An Overview of the Research Process

I arrived in Beirut a few days before the end of 2014 and the official start of my fieldwork. Arriving at a rather festive time facilitated my reintegration into the field (cf Chavez's (2008, p. 482) "expediency of access"): there was a relatively low number of shoots happening at the time, and my friends (participants) were in festive mood. I spent these first few days attending dinners, parties and events with these friends, catching up with them and having initial conversations about my purpose for the coming six months: ethnographing them. The fact that they were less bogged down and stressed with work and shoots allowed them to think more comfortably about my

re-entry into their lives. It also allowed them to come to terms with the finer details of their friend's research project for the coming six months and to reflect over this ("What sort of stuff will you be disclosing?" / "You won't be talking about illegal stuff, right?"). We had numerous conversations about what 'researching them' would entail, what sort of things I would be looking into and thereby negotiated my reintegration into their lives - as a friend but also this time as a researcher. There was a particularly high number of events and parties being held in this festive period, some of them organised by those people I wanted to research. I was given immediate backstage access to these. Farah and Assil, for instance, had organised a charity music and documentary screening event raising awareness for cancer: they had shot a documentary together and teamed up with the self-explanatorily-named Music4aCause for the event. Immediately, then, I was thrust into the field, particularly into the dissemination phase of cultural production.

These events helped me reacquaint myself with the 'taste' of cultural work and negotiate internally how I would participate in this work but also collect data from it. Parties were also spaces of rich ethnographic data collection, helping re-establish a sense of 'who's who' and 'who's with – or not with – who' (see also Robinson, 2013). My close knowledge of the 'field' helped here, particularly in relation to gaining 'access' to the busier, more senior members of my research population. Muriel, for example, is not a fan of parties and events but had to attend some of these to support her friends who were organising them. After 'doing the rounds' congratulating and saying hello to organisers and friends, Muriel and I would often then huddle around a small, uncomfortable stool and discuss against the backdrop of loud music my forthcoming observation of her life. At first thought, the setting of parties might not seem ideal for such sensitive discussions, but our situated experience (namely Muriel's dislike for parties in the first place) helped establish a 'bubble' where we negotiated the boundaries of my forthcoming participant observation as it pertained to her. These late-night conversations would often be followed-up by confirmation, reflection and logistical concretisation (e.g. "I'm free on Tuesday afternoon, come then and let's talk more about CineJam" Muriel would tell me) over morning coffee the next day. The privilege of knowing when and how to approach research participants is one of the advantages of insider research, as identified by Bell (2005). Below I provide a visual representation of my time in the field, focusing on the projects I participated in and

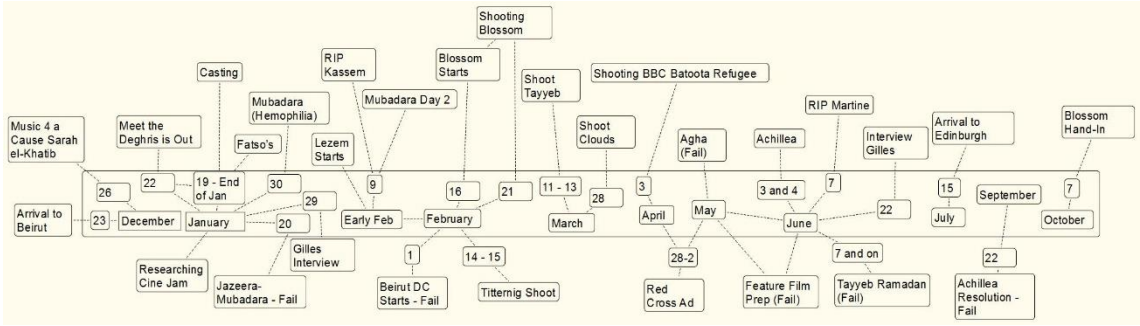

Figure 9: My fieldwork timeline

the 'spillover' of two projects into the data analysis phase. These include key events in the field, such as the at-times overlapping production of different projects (eg Titternig and Blossom) and projects or engagements that did not materialise or failed (of which there are six).

In the next phase, I began to attend the sets that my friends were working in, gathering initial observations and simultaneously re-familiarising them (and myself) with my presence in their lives. As the round of projects agreed upon prior to the festive period but produced after it ended, I was able to participate fully in the early phases (conception, pre-production) of new projects. During this period I made use of festive socialisations of weeks previous to gain access to field sites and projects outside the ones my friends were working in. To illustrate, I volunteered with Beirut DC as they organised the "Ayyam Beirut al-Cinema'iyya" festival (that for whatever reason they misguidedly bestowed upon the unattractive English branding of "Beirut Cinema Days" - foregoing the cultural significance of 'days' in Arabic in translation[29]). The process of getting to know people I was not previously acquainted with provided opportunities to collect a breadth of empirical data that later helped me 'test' and substantiate my emerging analyses. The conversations I had with the Music4aCause organiser as she sang and played the guitar to Bon Iver tracks and I accompanied her on the cello, for instance, helped illuminate working cultures outside but related to the immediate network I wanted to research (thereby providing room to test my observations and analysis in other contexts).

In parallel, my friends and I spent some time in the early weeks of 2015 'looking' for jobs. This phase, and to a lesser extent the conception and pre-production phases of the jobs we got, were relatively less intense than the production phases I participated

[29] Cf Cluley (2012)

in and observed. This intensity differential allowed me to maintain a distance with the field and gain a better understanding of the landscape: I knew the social histories of the members of the immediate network I wanted to study, but learned more about the 'new' people I met. I had the time (due to the less intense nature of conception and pre-production) to gather a corpus of empirical data on these participants that would later allow me to compare between the projects and context of my immediate network with those happening a little bit further afield. The 'new' biographical data I collected in this phase helped gain a sense of their 'storied pasts' and allowed initial comparisons between contexts. I knew, for instance, how Farah and I ran Bonnie & Clyde – the informal production house name we had given ourselves. But learning more about how Iron Heyoka – an established production house 'new' friends ran – helped me gain a more nuanced and grounded sense of the types of situations people in structurally similar positions of running production houses come across.

After a period of intense fieldwork from mid-January to mid-April of 2015, where I observed a number of projects in their entirety (from conception to dissemination), I somewhat distanced myself from the field in order to have a preliminary look at patterns and themes in the data I had collected. I discussed these with participants and 'bounced' them off of secondary literature on film production, nuancing some of my initial understandings and re-calibrating focus towards those on which the data I had gathered so far was not as abundant and diverse as I wanted. This necessitated a second phase of diving into deep fieldwork until mid-June of 2015, in which I ethnographed a new set of projects. After handing in the final project I worked on, shooting a stand-up comedy show, I re-established a distance from the field and took stock of the new corpus of empirical data at my disposal. I left Beirut in July of 2015, having spent the final month reflecting upon the data with participants and secondary literature for a second time. In total, then, I spent six months in the field, preceded by one or two months of preparation (November, December 2014) and one or two months of reflection (July, August 2015).

Upon my return to Edinburgh I began to think more closely about how to analyse the themes, patterns and processes I had initially coded with dates, colours and tags. I wanted to make sure that this was not short-sighted because of my embeddedness in the field, so I re-coded my data using NVivo10. I made use of the Sociology department's "Work in Progress" series, where staff and students present works in-

progress and seek advice from colleagues on the shaping of these works into building blocks of knowledge production. The feedback I received over my presentation helped me take an even-more distanced look at my data, making further sense of the abundance and diversity of field notes, voice notes, photographs, rushes, emails, call sheets, mood boards and memories of my time in the field. Once I was confident that I had a handle on this, I proceeded to a stage of preliminarily 'testing' by trial and error, 'playing with' some of the themes I thought were emerging from the data under the guidance of my supervisors. During this process I developed an understanding that there were three broad empirical 'planes' emerging from my data and approach: Clients, Projects and Relationships.

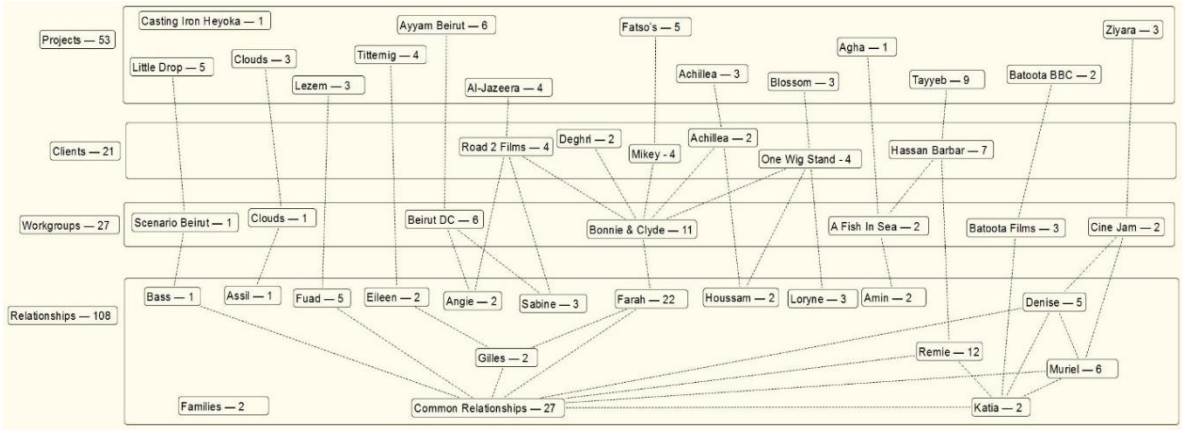

Figure 10: Empirically emerging analytic foci

I provide above a visual representation of this re-coding process where these key themes emerged, where the numbers next to the titles refer to the number of times these were referred to in my field notes. These, by dialogic analysis and reflection, came to form the backbones of the three analytic chapters of this thesis: patronage, objects, and relationships. Srivastava and Hopwood (2009, p. 76) argue that iteration in qualitative analyses is key to reflexively "sparking insight and developing meaning." More closely situated to network analysis, Berkowitz (1997, p. 4.2) argues:

> *"Part of what distinguishes qualitative analysis is a loop-like pattern of multiple rounds of revisiting the data as additional questions emerge, new connections are unearthed, and more complex formulations develop along with a deepening understanding of the material. Qualitative analysis is fundamentally an iterative set of processes."*

Insider Ethnography: Homes within Homes

In the weeks during which I 'moved' from Edinburgh to research Beirut, discussions with colleagues in similar stages of their research often centred around notions of home. Having already spent years away from home at Edinburgh, colleagues in similar phases of their doctoral research were now moving to new (fieldwork) homes - in my case this was a familiar space. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995, p. 115) warn that the "comfortable sense of being 'at home' is a danger signal,' arguing that "there must always remain some part held back, some social and intellectual 'distance'." I was aware, then, of the necessity to create a space for myself - one that I could use to establish this social and intellectual distance. I was in a privileged position: my uncles provided me with a small rooftop studio flat with a small kitchen and a large balcony. The apartment was in my childhood neighbourhood, only a few minutes away from my parents' home. I furnished it with a single hob for coffee, a variety of coffee makers, a desk and a bed at first. I had brought with me ornaments from Edinburgh, such as a candle holder, a small box and photos of adventures in Edinburgh. These objects were crucial in establishing the sense that my new fieldwork 'home' was to a degree insulated from Beirut through these objects that embodied my researcher self from Edinburgh (cf Cooley, 1902)) on objects and their influence on our sense of self). These were friendly reminders of my positionality as a researcher, and not just an 'insider', as were the Skype conversations I occasionally had with friends back in Edinburgh.

I covered the walls around my desk in my room with A2 papers on which I would scribble layers upon layers of key observations, ideas, patterns and threads to pull at in my everyday participant observation. To this end, in late evenings and early mornings I would transcribe field voice notes and compile dispersed bits of field notes from my notebook and phone. Around 9 or 10 am, as my participants started their working days, I would be translating these field notes into more 'distanced' reflections onto the sheets of A2 paper around me. This rather insulated process, most often done alone, alerted me to a number of patterns underlying my observations. An illustrative moment is when Kassem, a unit manager who Denise often relied upon, passed away during a pilgrimage to a holy site in Syria. Upon hearing the news, Denise and Muriel led efforts to visit his family and offer our condolences. Reflecting upon this process

led me to investigate further two threads: how my participants dealt with the death of a colleague, and what role death played in the life of the network. Thinking about the former, I was struck by how affected they were by the passing away of a colleague who they didn't necessarily interact with very often anyway: Denise, Muriel and a few others visited Kassem's family in their home to offer their condolences. This was, in other words, two very distinct worlds interacting over Kassem: a bunch of creatives, primarily women, entering the home of a traditional, religious family in the middle of a traditional, religious area in Beirut. It was indeed this shared intimacy between these two worlds that led me to seriously investigate the conflation of the professional and personal, the spillovers of life on set, at work, into life off it. Up until that point I had attributed whatever 'hunches' I had over this conflation to my subjective fascination with my research population.

Furthermore, this cognisance-by-reflection of death as constituting a key event in the life of the professional network I was researching led me to investigate past deaths. In the chapter on Production and Patronage, for instance, I shed light on how the length and intensity of production days is negotiated between producer and patron: "Shooting days cannot be longer than 12 hours." I discovered that producers' firm adherence to the statement, ie this convention in Becker's (1984) terms, came from the collective memory of the network. It was the death of a crewmember, driving home after a 36-hour shooting day in 1996, that first prompted film producers in the country to 'push back' on production house imposed shooting day lengths. While subsequent attempts at unionisation failed, the collective response of film producers was enough to establish and concretize the convention that shooting days should not last more than 12 hours. Finally, it was the death of a young and promising filmmaker that led me to understand the significance of the freelancers' self-management of work. She passed away after two weeks of consecutive production work on different projects. My participants' tone when discussing the 1996 incident was always one of opposition to production houses and their "thriftiness" (extending the length of shooting days saves money by lessening the number of required shooting days), but there was an air of sad resignation when discussing the other incident: "It's very easy to fall into an intense routine and drown in it... you forget yourself" (cf Rowlands and Handy, 2012). The iterative approach helped me ‘dig up’ this nuance in participant narratives. It was only once these conversations were intellectually embedded in the

complexities of how participants related to production houses that I was able to identify this change in tone.

Despite drawing upon the rather sad theme of death, I hope to have demonstrated here how my apartment facilitated a regular intellectual back and forth between being "in the field" and "coming back from the field" (cf Coffey 1999, p. 89). Outside of this temporally-contingent facility (in that this process of reflection at home took place in the early mornings and late evenings), my fieldwork apartment also allowed me to 'centralise' work processes, such as the time-consuming preparation of mood-boards, look-books, call-sheets and 'treatments' during the conception and pre-production phases. Indeed, such observations locate the life of the network within its wider socio-cultural context (eg 'the crew' visiting Kassem's home for condolences) and historical specificities (eg the 'informal' formalisation of shooting day conventions in 1996).

Participant Reflections

Before I discuss more closely the 'work' that my participants and I did in my apartment it is necessary to touch upon some of the things we did while not working. Tracy (2010) argues that member reflections act as a measure towards ensuring the credibility of the research, where participants comment and reflect upon the research (cf Guba, 1981 on member checking). Indeed, member reflections steered the research process during both the data collection and analysis phases. Having decided to take a step back from the field in my final month, Remie – a friend and research participant with whom my relationship evolved throughout fieldwork – and I would often spend our days at the beach. On these days I would share with her some of my initial findings, on career progression for instance, and she would reflect upon these by drawing upon her own experiences. I note here that while Remie and I knew each other from before my time as a researcher, we were hardly close. Her reflections not only allowed me to find out more about her own trajectory in film production, but they would also add nuance to my analysis. In chapter six, “God Moments”, one of the sub-headings refers to how filmmakers 'zig-zag' to seniority, gaining experience in different production departments as they 'grow' in the industry and start to command higher fees. It was Remie's admission that she would like to work as a director that shed light on this convolution of career trajectories. Up until then I was under the impression that Remie was happy to remain a well-reputed art director, ignorant of

the intended strategic use of her reputation as an art director to later facilitate a move towards directing work. Similarly, it was the distinction Gilles placed between 'work that you have to do' and 'work that you want to do', and his characterization of this self-management by drawing upon the French notion of sinécure that helped me nuance some of my analysis on the role films as objects play in constructing their filmmakers (see chapter five).

But member reflections also 'directed' my data collection in many ways too. In chapter five, I describe some of the conversations Fuad (a participant) and I would have together after work meetings using our shared appreciation for whisky as an excuse. It was during these whisky sessions, for instance, that I first shared with Fuad the empirically-developing notion that the progression of filmmaking careers is intimately bound to the films that they produce. This in itself was hardly a groundbreaking observation; indeed, I cite and discuss this literature in Production and Patronage and Producing Objects. Fuad's reflections here were crucial: "Films can make or break you," he said in acknowledgement, before going on to tell me about his short film "Der Fotograf" discussed in chapter five. It was Fuad's reference to a film as an active agent that led me to direct a more rigorous gaze at objects. It alerted me to the significance of obvious but rather invisible significance turns of phrases: filmmakers would speak about their projects in the active tone, asking 'what *it needs*', for instance, as opposed to asking 'what we can do to it' in meetings between the conception and pre-production phases. According to Tracy (2010, p. 844), member reflections are useful because they allow a "reflexive elaboration" of the emerging findings of the research. It was an elaboration on Farah's own reflections that prompted the inclusion of a chapter on objects in this thesis. We were discussing why I had kept the paper tablemat on the back of which we wrote our initial ideas for a photoshoot. She advised me to look deeper into call sheets: "Time is different on set. When you're on set you're not following chronological time - it's determined by the call sheet. It reconciles time as we experience it with production time" (cf Born, 2015b)

Documents and Objects

I have always been unashamedly known in the network of producers I research as the go-to person for coffee-related matters. This, coupled with the spacious terrace of my rooftop apartment, made for an enticing workspace that embodied in many ways the network itself: the minimal furniture was sourced with my participants from the same junkyards that provide the props for production work and included the 'quirky' furniture one would find in production houses (such as a hammock). When in conception and pre-production, then, participants with whom I was involved in projects would come and work on my terrace. We would collaborate on the development of key production documents such as the mood-board and the call-sheet. These, and the A2 scratchpads we used for notes, stayed in my apartment and made up a significant portion of my field data. From an actor-network perspective, Prior (2008) calls for a focus on the function of such documents in social research, arguing that they act as "active agents in episodes of interaction and schemes of social organization" (*ibid*, p. 824), just as time on set is mediated by the call sheet. I address the ontology of objects from which Prior (2008) departs more closely in my chapter Producing Objects, and while my focus in that chapter is on film objects as opposed to documents, I believe they resonate sufficiently with the approach outlined in Prior's (2008) paper.

Leaving aside ontological debates until then, though, it is important to note how my research was informed by thinking about the function of documents. I describe above how I came to take more seriously the conflation of the personal and professional in my research; here I shed light on the role documents played in this process, particularly in the reference to shared narratives in the final analytic chapter on God Moments. I refer in that chapter to a phrase first coined by Cyril (a director), that God is a Great Gaffer[30]. I took Farah's advice on seriously considering call sheets at a time when I was thinking most closely about the conflation of the professional and personal in the lives of filmmakers: how[31] are they colleagues and simultaneously friends? How do their shared experience on set translate to off-set narratives and projects? In short,

[30] The person who 'sets up' the lighting as per the instructions of the DoP.
[31] Here, 'how' referring more to a focus on the mechanisms of friendship as opposed to a mere fascination that co-workers can be friends too.

I was thinking about the final analytic chapter of my thesis. I remembered that on most Shankaboot and Fasateen callsheets there was a "quote of the day" box not included in other call sheets I have come across. I was able to retrieve three such call sheets, one of which pertaining to the day my parents' apartment was a shooting location (in figure eleven below). The quotes reflected the mood of the production at the time - "Let's Do This!" was the message for a particularly intense shooting day, "4 days to go with the dream team!" as crewmembers began to tire towards the end of the production phase. Call sheets participated in the emergence of these shared narratives and disseminated them throughout the network, legitimating certain aspects of these narratives and ignoring others. These calls sheets *participated* in the emergence of a sense of togetherness.

Saturday the 2nd of JUNE 2012

Katia Saleh/ Producer: 70 794 986 **Denise Jabbour/ Production Manager:** 70 197 856 **Farah Naboulsi/ AD :** 70 937 422 **Nicolas Cardahi/ AD :** 03 233 145 **Marwa Itani/ Production Coordinator :** 03 837 884	**DAY OF SHOOT** **N°11**	**Ready to Shoot: 09h00** **CALL TIME : 07h00** **Lunch break: 13h30** **Sunrise/ Sunset : 5 :29 AM– 7 :42 PM** **Weather : SUNNY SIDE UP**

Crew meeting point: Sodeco in front of La Piazza, Parking
Shooting location : Arek Dakessian's House ☺

« 4 days to go to with the dream team ! »

Figure 11 Quote of the day

The Visual

Directly relating to Lahire's (2011, p. 29) comment that sociologists are not as interested in "life offstage" as they should be is the breadth of visual material underlying the production of films, and by consequence research on the production of films. A common saying in cinema is that one should aim to have one hour of cinema for every three hours of raw footage, usually followed by the admission that in reality the ratio is closer to one hour of cinema for every ten hours of raw footage, but the point on the abundance of visual data still stands. During my six months of participant observation, for instance, I gathered over 150 gigabytes of visual material, from raw footage to raw photos. Here I focus my discussion particularly on visual material produced *outside* of the production phase and their methodological significance in my

thesis[32]. Upon being given a Canon 5D Mark III[33] by a production house for whom Farah and I were meant to shoot an episode for an AlJazeera series, we proceeded to spend the night trying - and mostly failing - to compose the types of shots we felt we would be needing to shoot during the next shooting day. As my frustrations at our failures began to seep out, they contrasted starkly with Farah's own concentrated calmness. On set the next day Farah and I exchanged a silent congratulatory look after successfully pulling off a smooth pan (rotating the camera horizontally to achieve a certain effect). As we reviewed our footage at the start of post-production, though, Farah remarked how "everyone who goes into film from photography does this," lamenting that I "just don't stay on a good frame" and "wait for the action to come" to me, instead following the action and producing a shaky, unclear image of what is unfolding.

Furthermore, as I ethnographed the pro-bono production of a music video called Titternig (discussed in the chapter God Moments), I was struck by the use of an unorthodox camera rig: Karim and Nabil (Director of Photography and First Camera Assistant, but also childhood best friends) had attached a high-end point-and-shoot to a vintage flex camera. The resulting hybrid was difficult to operate: Karim had to hold it from the bottom and look downwards (as opposed to straight ahead) in order to see what he was filming. I was struck by the difficulty of this technique: 'shooting from the hip' is a difficult enough ask in photography, let alone film! Nabil, who had constructed the rig, explained that him and Karim had been shooting with it for months, clarifying why it all seemed so effortless to them. The many gigabytes of shaky, failed footage shot for purposes of experimentation and self-education have little value as ethnographic evidence, as Pink (2007, p. 43) argues. Indeed, there is very little to be learned from watching two hours of stop-start pans from the left to the right of an empty room at 1 a.m. in the morning, other than the fact that the filmmaker remained calm as the researcher got frustrated. Shooting this failed footage, though, was extremely valuable to my ethnography of networks of film production in Beirut. These "realist recordings" (*ibid* - realist by virtue of their failure on aesthetic grounds) laid bare the distinction between the final film product and the often unnoticed, hidden-away-in-hard-drives investment underlying the film's production, between 'reality' and

[32] In parallel, it is worth reflecting on such moments as instances of unpaid affective labour.
[33] A newer generation of the camera model Farah and I produced most of our films with.

the aesthetic, fictional, production of cultural objects. Pink (2007, p. 112) stresses the significance of failed or raw visual material that does not 'make the cut' in the final product, arguing that "new levels of engagement and of self-awareness are achieved by participants and ethnographic knowledge is produced" through an awareness of what is left out of the final product. And so the interaction between documents and failed footage offered a different, visual route to exploring the subjective situated experience of my participants. I understood why Farah would not get frustrated at our failed attempts to produce a good practice pan in 2015 after reading one of her "quotes of the day" in a 2013 Fasateen call sheet[34]: a more embodied and tacit understanding of the situated experience of aesthetic, film, production.

"<3Films run more smoothly than real Life. There are no traffic jams, no boring moments. Films just go on and on like trains, you see; trains in the night. People like you and me, you know, we're only happy in our job, making films<3

Francois Truffaut"

Mixed-Methods Social Network Analysis (MMSNA): Methods Serving Masters

Crossley and Edwards (2016, 1.2) define methodology as "the work of getting methods to serve a [theoretical/epistemological] master." Here I discuss more explicitly the mixed-methods social network analytic methodology of this thesis. Having reviewed a number of empirical studies that combine qualitative and quantitative approaches to social network analysis, Edwards (2010, p. 18) concludes that mixing methods can add value to research in three main ways: 1) facilitating a greater awareness for context, 2) enabling an 'outsider's' view of the network and 3) supporting a focus on change. The first and third points, it should be noted, resonate with Emirbayer's (1997, p. 290) statement on "the primacy of contextuality and process in [relational] sociological analysis" discussed in the previous chapter. Additionally, Edwards' third point also sheds light on how SNA's "paradoxical"

[34] I recognise that here I am suggesting Farah mystifies her work as a filmmaker. To be sure, I discuss more closely this mystification in relation to embodied learning in the God Moments chapter.

(Emirbayer 1997, p. 305) difficulty in explaining change can be circumvented. Edwards' (2010) second point, meanwhile, is particularly relevant to discussions on positionality in qualitative research. I engage with each of these in the pages below, after outlining how this thesis does MMSNA.

The three themes emerging from the data, pertaining to patronage, objects and relationships necessarily influenced each other but were also bound by their own specific spatio-temporal contingencies. The projects for which we developed mood-boards on my balcony during the conception and pre-production phases would not have progressed to the on-set production of the cultural object without the approval of clients and patrons, for instance. Conversely, we would not have been invited to even propose a mood-board to clients without their knowledge of and satisfaction with the outcome of previous projects we had produced for other patrons. But while prospective clients and patrons attach significance to the success of previous projects, it is on-set interactions that producers attach the most significance to: "After you make the film, you get paid and the film goes out. What remains from it is the memory of how it was made, not how good the film was,[35]" as Muriel told me in one of our afternoon sessions. So a study of the formation and maintenance of networks of film production necessarily entails an analysis of each of these three foci in addition to the emergent properties of their interaction.

In these temporally-contingent social settings of 'the set,' crewmembers form and establish personal relationships in conjunction with their professional lives, if for no other reason than that they spend the majority of their time in each other's company during the production phase. This is particularly the case with my research participants, some of whom have known each other since school and most of whom have been producing cultural objects together since 2009, often referring to themselves as 'the crew', 'the dream team' or other affectionate labels. There are a number of practical and intellectual reasons that necessitate a mixed-methods social network analytic methodology if one is to arrive at a closer understanding of the formation and maintenance of networks of film production, then. Practically, these include the near impossibility of giving discursive, text-based accounts of how upwards of 30 people interact and relate to each other on-set. Off-set, where roles

[35] (cf Wohl, 2015)

and relationships are less clearly defined, this problem is compounded further. The mathematical, quantitative tools of SNA allow to "process" this "hurly burly of social life in such a way as to create a very abstract, formal and structural mapping" of these relations (Crossley, 2010b, p.2). This allows the researcher to clearly demarcate the spatio-temporally contingent structure of interactions on set, thereby analytically separating the professional organisation of interactions on set from the less formal and murkier relationships off it.

Both Edwards (2010) and Crossley (2010b; Crossley and Edwards 2016) broadly distinguish between qualitative methods as particularly conducive for an understanding of the content of social ties and quantitative methods of their structure. Mixing qualitative and quantitative methods generates a “tension, whose resolution deepens our understanding and enriches our analysis” (*ibid* 2.7). Most empirical data this thesis is based on has been collected through qualitative means of participant observation, informal conversations, online research and – where available – historical analysis of film credits. This qualitative relational data has then been abstracted and operationalised as different types of ties (e.g., work ties: who reports to whom on set) and converted into matrices. Hollstein (in Domínguez and Hollstein, 2014, p. 17) refers to this as a “quantitizing strategy” where “qualitative data are converted into numerical codes and re-analyzed quantitatively.” Crossley (2010b, p. 5) states that there is more to this process of conversion from qualitative to quantitative data, shedding light on the non-linearity of the research process. He argues that matrices and graphs “impose a discipline upon data gathering” by way of the “standardisation of observation procedures” that the survey procedure entails (*ibid*).

It is not just the 'hurly burly' of a single project that SNA allows to abstract, however, rather the *multiplicity* of these repeat collaborations (Faulkner and Anderson 1987) over an extended period of time. Triangulating my ethnographic data collection on people's participation in different projects with the text-based credit data where available, I have drawn upon quantitative SNA tools to map the collaboration of 88 individuals on 21 projects in two distinct time-periods, represented in diagrams T1 and T2 below where blue nodes are projects and red nodes individuals. I engage most closely with these illustrative diagrams in the chapters Producing Objects and on God Moments, but for the time being suffice it to note how already, visually, we get a

sense of the 'shared experience' and history of the network this thesis is concerned with, but also the co-evolution of network members and their positions over time.

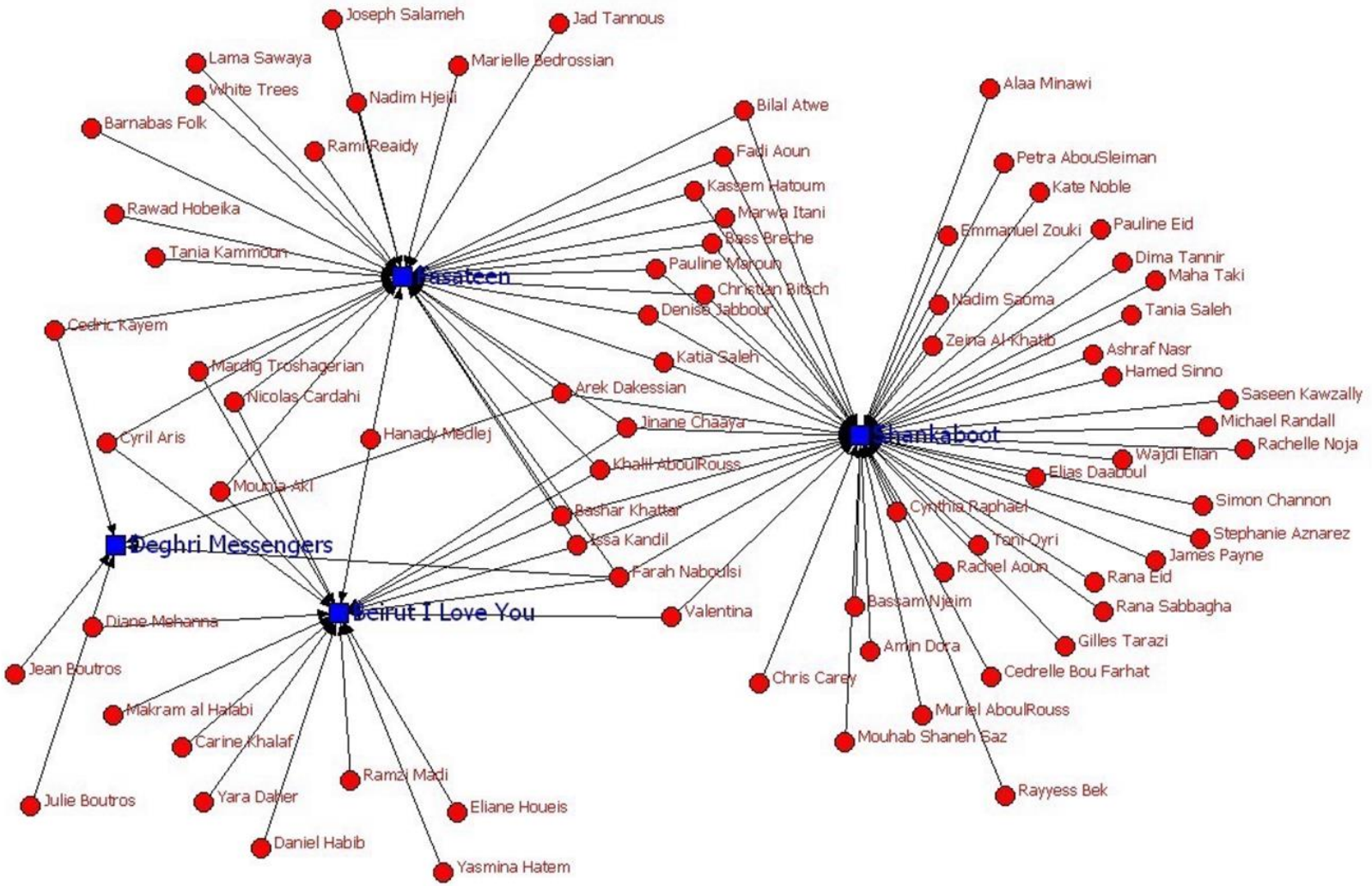

Figure 12 Production network of Shankaboot, Beirut I Love You and Fasateen (T1)

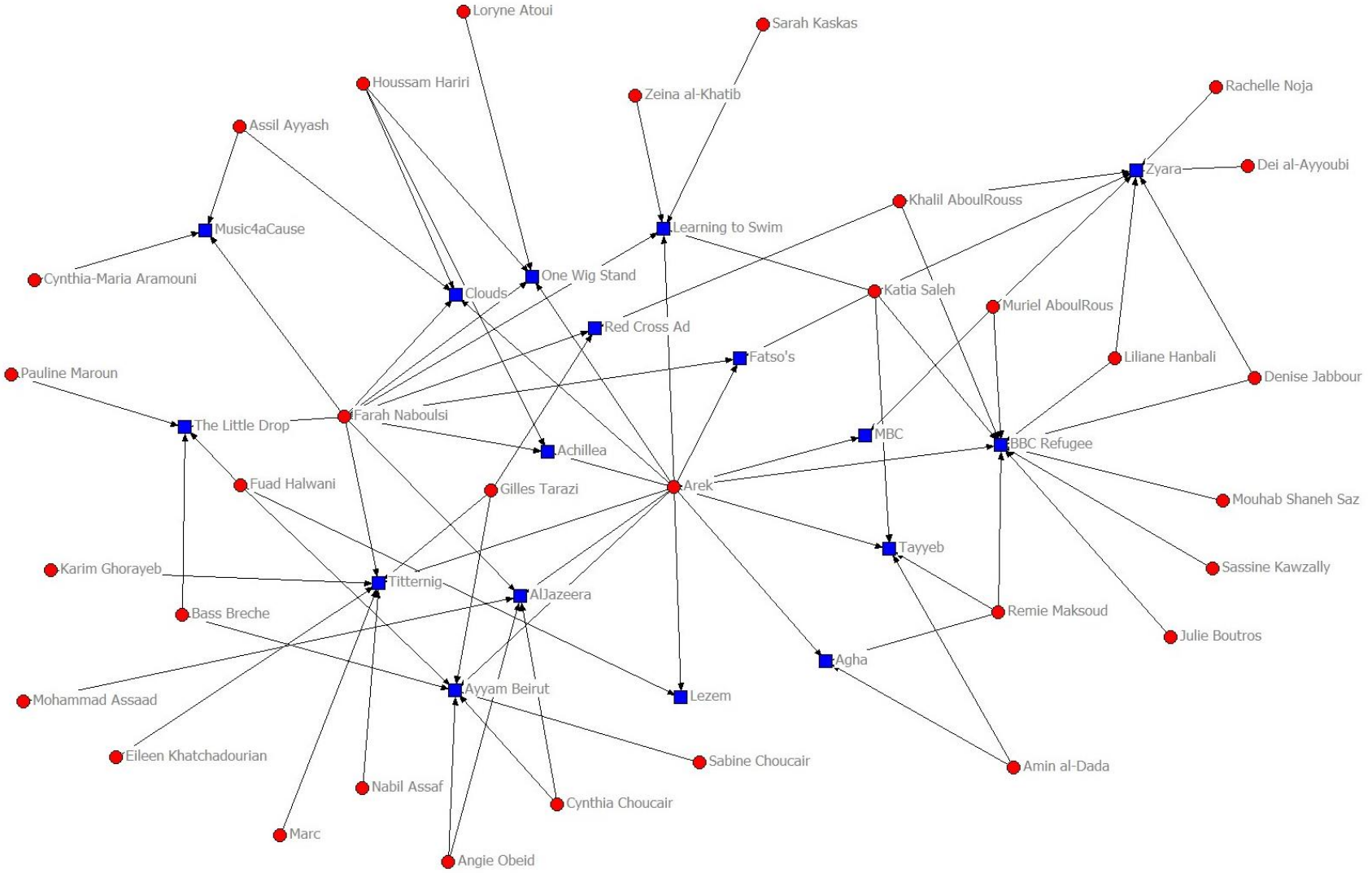

Figure 13 Production network at the time of my fieldwork (T2)

A symbiotic division of labour (Edwards 2010, p. 22) thus develops between the qualitative and quantitative methods, and Crossley (2010b, p. 12-13) elaborates upon this. He suggests that “qualitative data gathering (…) can begin in a relatively open-ended manner,” as the intentionally open-ended overarching research question of this thesis also dictates. Qualitative data gathering can “follow details and leads, as and when they emerge” (*ibid*). Meanwhile, quantitative methods of analysis (through the ‘quantitization’ of the qualitatively gathered data) “strip a network back to certain bare essentials, separating the wood of relational form from the trees of relational content” (Crossley 2010b, p. 5). In conjunction, qualitative analysis allows one to re-introduce into explanatory accounts the cultural dimension of networks. These methods then work “in complementary ways to offer a more penetrating and robust analysis” (Crossley and Edwards 2016, 1.2).

Crossley (2010b) sheds light on the interaction between social structure (of the network) and agency (the "doing" of structure by agents): he argues that one advantage of SNA is that it does not conceive structure as being "above" actors, rather "between" them, defined as the pattern of relations between actors. He stresses the importance of not losing sight "of the fact both that nodes are actors and, perhaps more importantly, that ties are histories of iterated interactions; that they are 'done' by inter-actors and, as such, very much belong to the domain of agency too" (Crossley 2010b, p. 11). This is a crucial point to retain particularly in the lives of project-based, freelance film producers who, as secondary literature has long told us, actively and agentically "manage" the structural uncertainties of their industry (i.e., its project-based organisation). MMSNA allows us not only to identify how this inherent uncertainty is managed interactively among actors but also the specific opportunities and constraints afforded to actors by way of their structural position in the network. "In short, what happens in a network is an outcome both of structure, including the structural position an actor occupies, and the way in which actors interactively "make out" within that structure" (Crossley 2010b, p. 11).

Sub-Themes and Research Objectives

In relation to patronage, I observed that the relations through which production networks secured jobs, say through the recommendation of a friend, had major

implications for the negotiating power of both producers and those commissioning production when it came to the production budget. This was an important point to investigate more deeply for its influence on the formation of production networks: producers have floor / ceiling price ranges and their participation in a production network is contingent upon - among other things – how much the project pays. Furthermore, during my participant observation of various sets, I noticed that the presence of clients on set, and the way they carried themselves, had profound implications on the production process itself: instead of just having to focus on the crew and the production process, producers were also expected to 'manage' their clients. The research objectives pertaining to how patronage ties contribute to the formation and maintenance of networks of film production, then, were two-fold:

RO1) Identify and compare the salient properties in the content of bridging or brokerage ties in the selection phase (Santagata 2010) that link between producer and patron in different project settings.

RO2) Identify and compare changes in the on-set structure (form) of the production network in different project settings with different patrons.

A qualitative engagement with the brokerage ties through which production networks secure projects led to important findings that point to both Granovetter's (1973) strength of weak ties and Burt's (2004, 1997) structural holes. This added value to the analysis by shedding light, for instance, on the initial embeddedness of the patronage tie within other friendship and strategic ties. An illustrative example of this is a photoshoot I conducted for a restaurant that had just opened. I had informed a friend that I was looking for projects to participate in and observe, so he recommended me to his friend – a new restaurant owner. The structural hole position my friend was in allowed him to reap the benefits of putting producer and patron in touch: he requested I don't overcharge the restaurant owner and committed the owner in turn to cater for the music events he organised. By contrast, another friend (who owned a graphic design agency) had been approached by a previous intern looking for a food photographer and recommended me. This was more of a professional endeavour, and what 'got' me the job was the 'weak' tie that bound him to me and the potential patron. My negotiating power was not curtailed here, since my friend was not doing me a 'favour', rather he was doing his job. He had, of course, an interest in the development of the patronage tie between myself and the client: recommending a

good photographer reflects well on the person doing the recommending. These were all insights I could not have broached had I purely analysed the structural properties of the recommendations through which I got those two photography jobs.

But while the new restaurant owner left us 'do our job' on set, the other client – and his family members – were keen to exert a certain control over the production process. This was a control at times contrary to the aesthetic dimensions of the work agreed upon during pre-production. The influence of these two different 'types' of patronage ties was certainly something I experienced (and so did my crew), but would not have been able to engage with rigorously without drawing upon quantitative SNA methods. Indeed, through the notion of equivalence, by 'abstracting' ties on set to their work dimension (who reports to whom), I was able to show that clients who exert control over the set (i.e. requiring crewmembers to report to them during the production process) changed the role-based structure of the network. These structural changes were subtle and ostensibly benign – their salience only coming to the fore through the quantitative SNA method of hierarchical clustering that mathematically dissects the network into equivalence classes. While the network hierarchy in the first project was two-tiered, with assistants reporting to department heads, the second photoshoot had a three-tiered hierarchy: client → department head → assistant. In conjunction with this quantitative analysis, a qualitative understanding of the goings on of the network during the production phase provided the insight that the maintenance of networks of cultural production is – among other things – contingent upon how well producers or department heads manage different types of clients.

Both during the pre-production and production phases there were myriad references to films (objects) in the active sense ('what does *it need*'), and these produced objects were given central roles in the narratives of those who produced them. These necessitated a deeper investigation into the role of these objects in the lives of their makers, and consequently in the formation and maintenance of the production networks they (both the producers and the films) were embedded in. While the above objectives on investigating patronage aimed at better understanding the relationships around the production of an object, and their influence on the formation and maintenance of production networks, here the focus is on the situated ties of production and consumption mediated through the film objects. The research

objectives pertaining to the influence of films on the formation and maintenance of the networks that produce them, then, were:

RO3) Identify salient properties in the content of production and consumption ties between people and objects that mediate relations between producers and potential patrons (i.e. how relations between network members are mediated through the production and consumption ties between person and object)

RO4) Identify the influence of the structure of various production ties between person and object on the content of these ties (i.e. how one's participation on various projects (form) influences one's self-narratives and career progression (content).

Here, MMSNA offers opportunities for a closer excavation of the role projects and the production of cultural objects play in the lives of filmmakers. In the collective outlining of a mixed-methods social network analytic methodology, Crossley (2010b), Edwards (2010), Crossley and Edwards (2016) and Bellotti (2014) discuss some of the ontological and epistemological considerations underlying this mixing of methods. Crossley and Edwards (2016, 2.1 - 2.9) argue that it is researchers who bring "theoretical/epistemological assumptions to bear in their research and upon their methods" and not the methods themselves. "The key is not the methods employed but the way they are used" (*ibid*). With objects emerging as a key player in the lives of filmmakers (and therefore in the formation and maintenance of networks of film production in Beirut), MMSNA allows for a careful, nuanced and coherent exploration of this role. In the chapter on Producing Objects, for instance, I engage, qualitatively, with changes in the structure of the network between T1 and T2, focusing upon the projects produced in these periods. This allying of quantitative methods that provide a snapshot of network structure at two key points in time through two-mode network analysis, with qualitative methods providing a closer understanding of the interactional processes underlying this change sheds light on the role of objects in the formation, maintenance, and evolution of film production networks in Beirut.

MMSNA allows one to shift between scales of analysis and to adopt a more macro-level viewpoint on the structural changes imposed by the cyclical repetition of situated projects. Here again, though, engaging only with the form (structure) of the network tells us very little about its formation and maintenance other than shedding light on the continued collaboration of network members (and therefore the maintenance of

the network) over time. Note that here the focus is on the interaction of people with objects. A tension is thus generated between structural change and how this change comes about. This is a limitation of quantitative methods: we know the structure of the network has changed but cannot say much about how or why this change has come about. A qualitative engagement with these changes, with a focus on *how* network members relate to the projects that they produce, allows for a resolution of this tension and therefore a deeper understanding of these interacting planes. Specifically, by drawing upon MMSNA I am able to engage with the research question How do the cultural products produced by production networks influence the formation and maintenance of these networks? by first quantitatively identifying structural changes in the network (maintenance) and then engaging qualitatively with the interactive processes between actors and objects that 'bring about' these structural changes.

The above discussed research objectives are necessarily focused upon particular network positions as opposed to the whole network: a production assistant, for example, gradually becomes a production manager after working on a number of projects as an assistant. But while filmmakers produce different films with every project (an advertisement one week, a TV series the next,), often the people with whom projects are produced remain the same (SPWGs). The increasing number of projects produced by the same or similar people (structure), and by that token the increased interaction among producers, leads to emergent properties across the whole of the network itself (content). An illustrative case for this is the evolution of production ties among crewmembers of a feature film into sexual ties as well. In this case, it is the length of interaction on one project among crewmembers (feature films often take months to shoot, requiring crewmembers to stay together on location throughout the production phase) that gives rise to new ties, but their repetitive short interaction across a number of projects also leads to similar emergent properties. To this end, the research objectives of the final chapter pertain to the whole network:

RO5) Identify changes in the content of relations across their repetitive, context-specific but similarly-structured reactivation of production ties.

In the final chapter of this thesis, having looked at the interactive configuration of network structure on set, as influenced by the activation of different patronage ties and then engaging with the role objects play in the off-set lives of film producers, I am

able to analytically 'isolate' interactions among network members (including objects) and the emergent properties of these durable relations. Drawing upon quantitative SNA tools I am able to 're-calibrate' the analysis from focusing on the interaction between humans and objects to interactions between humans (by converting the 2-mode network of people participating in projects into a one-mode network made up of the totality of interactions among actors across these projects). Here, the significance of "histories of iterated interaction" that Crossley (2010a, p. 11) speaks of comes to the fore. Drawing upon similar strategies as the chapter above, whereby I complement the quantitative identification of patterns (structure) with a qualitative understanding of how these structures are created in relation to objects, here the quantitative arrival at a network of film producers interacting with each other over a sustained period of time tells us little about the content of these relations. "Relationships are not things that are either absent or present. Nor are they uniform. They are lived histories of iterated interaction which constantly evolve" (Crossley 2010a, p. 11). Quantitative methods inform us of the existence of the network here, reminding us that we are studying something that exists in real life and is not just a figment of our imaginations.

The significance of existing relations to the maintenance and evolution of the network they make up over time, however, is a matter we can only uncover qualitatively. In other words, the question: 'how do personal, person-to-person (including object-mediated) relationships influence the formation and maintenance of networks of film production in Beirut?' can only be illuminated through a qualitative understanding of the situated experience of actors relating to one another, and of the interactional processes out of which shared narratives and perceptions of the network emerge. In short, it is the *content* of relations, achieved by way of interaction among actors, that shape and influence the structural properties of the network. It is worth noting here that this resonates with Zolberg's (1990) project of identifying the middle-level societal structures that translate subjective experiences to objective processes.

Having focused on the evolution of particular network positions as a function of the production ties they shared with different objects, I turned to the network as a whole. I drew upon the same quantitatively assembled illustrative network diagrams to qualitatively analyse the emergent properties of the repeat collaboration (therefore interaction) of people on a number of projects over a number of years. Here it is

important to recognise that the illustrative network diagrams and the relations they illuminate between person and project are necessarily reductive and 'stripped back' abstractions of how people related to these projects. Qualitative data analysis allowed me to then reintroduce the complexity of these relations, as the above reference to the particularities of call sheets indicates. As Crossley (2010a, p. 18) states, "a network is not simply a set of actors plus a set of ties but a "world" in which identities, rituals, shared feelings and meanings emerge. That they emerge in the way that they do is no doubt influenced by network structure (…) but they, in turn, influence network structure and mediate the effects which it has upon network members." Qualitative data analysis therefore allowed me to better understand the ways in which these shared meanings and narratives emerged out of people's repeat collaboration on multiple projects. Here I drew particularly upon the shared narratives that emerged out of these repeat collaborations, their underlying cultural (meaning) significance and, in turn, their 'loop-like' (cf Berkowitz, 1997, p. 4.2)influence on the network itself.

On Limitations

Crossley and Edwards (2016, 1.2) state that a realist relational ontology "positively demands" the mixing of methods. The key here is that for realists, networks already exist and are experienced by their members – our abstraction of these existing networks are necessarily reductive attempts to explain them. Networks here remain metaphors that shed light on the situated experience of participants but never truly capture its complexity. But such a conception of networks is conducive to addressing the limitations of network analysis that Emirbayer (1997, pp. 303 – 310) has identified – on setting network boundaries, causality and change – specifically because they demand a mixing of methods. The 'problem' of setting network boundaries in this thesis is circumvented by the reality of the network: the boundaries of the network are dictated by people's participation on projects. Here, the mixing of methods helps triangulate people's participation on projects, allowing one to circumvent the politics of film credits (not everyone who participates in the production of a film is given due credit in the credits roll). Cross-referencing credits, then, with participant observations of who participated on a project, and informal conversations with people ("who was

the production assistant in season two?") thus leads to a robust identification of network boundaries[36].

Further, the path-dependency of film production as necessarily following particular phases (selection, conception, pre-production, production, post-production, dissemination) as identified by Santagata (2010) and Krätke (2002) synergises with the benefits of a mixed-methods approach in relation to causality and change. Film projects have their start dates, production schedules, release dates, and end dates. Crewmembers' participation on film projects also follows explicit temporalities: editors do not start work until the post-production phase, for instance, while location scouts stop working at the end of the pre-production phase. A qualitative understanding of the "goings on" (Crossley 2010b, p. 3), such as the roles that govern people's participation on projects, allows one, therefore, to situate each project, and each participant in each project, within their "temporal-relational contexts" (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, p. 969). Indeed, the limitations Emirbayer (1997) discusses pertain predominantly to the quantitative analysis of networks, but supplementing these with qualitative accounts helps circumvent these limitations through narrative explanation. As Crossley (2010b, p 30) states:

> *"We cannot map all of the nuances of all relationships in a network, nor predict what those nuances might be in advance or which will prove important. What we can do, however, is supplement a conventional sociometric mapping of the network with a detailed qualitative account that seeks to bring the network to life by exploring the meanings etc. that animate it. We can identify "tricky," "interesting" and "significant" relations for close attention and note the various issues that seem to animate particular sub-groupings of the network."*

Qualitative Data Collection: Positions and Perspectives

Within an MMSNA methodology, and particularly in relation to the interacting configuration of mixed methods in this thesis, there are two main responsibilities bestowed upon qualitative data collection. 1) Gathering relational data to be abstracted and quantitized into network ties, and 2) gaining a better understanding of the complexity of these ties and relations. It is particularly the second responsibility

[36] I discuss the politics of credits rolls more closely in chapter four.

that brings to the fore issues of the researcher's positionality, that is "the aspects of an insider researcher's self (..) which is [sic] aligned or shared with participants" (Chavez, 2008, p. 475). Chavez (2008) characterizes as total insiders researchers "who share multiple identities or profound experiences with the community they are studying" (Greene, 2014, p. 2). Approached through these terms, I am a total insider, and my positionality as such requires a careful, reflexive discussion of the implications of my position both on my qualitative collection of data and its analysis.

There are a number of doctoral theses on the lives of film producers, including Faulkner's (1985, 1983) dissertation on Hollywood composers that I have learned from throughout the research process. In writing my own methodology chapter, I have drawn particularly upon three more recent doctoral theses of relevance to my topic: Hjorth's[37] (2013) dissertation on networked cultural production, Platman's (2002; see also Platman, 2004) interview-based work on older filmmakers and Lam's (2012) actor-network-theory-informed ethnography on the production of fictional crime series in Canada. Each of these engaged truthfully and honestly in their methods chapters with the specificities of their own work. Hjorth (2013, p. 72 - 114), for instance, deals with methodological considerations pertaining to ethnographing an online community, her chapter complete with screenshots of her own presence in that community as a member but also researcher; Lam (2012, p. 57 - 95) discusses the reflexive 'trail-sniffing' of the ANT ethnographer and provides a focused but comprehensive table of television production studies most relevant to her work; while Platman (2002), having outlined the research philosophy underpinning her research, engages with her own positionality as a previous industry member and its implications on the production of her dissertation. Of the varied and deep ways in which these three dissertations have informed my own, the most relevant of these for the current chapter is an identification, awareness, and honest engagement with the specificities of my own dissertation. It is often said that producing a doctoral dissertation is a lonely process; I am grateful to these three authors whose work has accompanied me in my loneliness and whose honest methodological treatments have given me the confidence and motivation to replicate their honesty. The specificities of my thesis, I

[37] I extend my gratitude to the author here for sharing with me her dissertation.

believe, are its subscription to a relational paradigm which I have discussed above, but also my position as a total insider in relation to my research participants.

Positionality

While it is true, as Lumsden (2013, p. 2) claims, that we no longer question the need for reflexivity particularly in ethnographic research, engaging with early debates on positionality and reflexivity have helped me make sense, after-the-fact, of the 'mess' created by my own position in relation to those I researched. Chiseri-Strater (1996, p. 119) states that in ethnography we learn about ourselves as well as about the 'other': in the context of my own research this was an important process that I underwent as I transitioned first from naive artist en route to being an integrated professional (Becker 1976) to student, then from student to researcher of the community to which I belong (i.e., the network of film production this thesis is concerned with). Chavez's (2008) reference to profound shared experience with the research population is reminiscent of the term *Abrum* in Armenian, most loyally translated as the situated *living* of an experience (the root word of Abrum is Abril, to live). Coffey (1999), meanwhile, when discussing the increasing amount of research conducted 'at home', asserts that "'in the field' and then 'coming back from the field' are still real categories and temporal boundaries." As I attempt to give a loyal reconstructed account of the research process, then, it is important to foreground my own 'abrum' between these two temporal and intellectual boundaries of 'in the field' and 'coming back from the field.' This process has had significant implications on the collection and analysis of my ethnographic data. I begin by discussing the duality of the notion of positionality that I reflexively encountered during the research process. I first refer to the profoundity of my shared experience with the research participants and reflect upon its repercussions on my positionality in relation to the academy as well as in relation to my participants.

When I was in school, it was common for classmates to show each other where we lived, tell each other of prominent family members to 'namedrop' and to signpost 'safe spots' in case any of us got 'stuck' in the area of the school and was unable to return home for security reasons. As we grew a little bit older and some of us started to have dial-up internet connections in our homes, we would dis- and re-connect to the internet, mediating between text-based conversations on MSN with our friends in

internet cafes and phone calls to their families informing them of the safety and whereabouts of their children. After spending hours indoors with our families and getting used to the sound of bombs dropping on Beirut's power plants, we would peek at the UPS supply and decide that pushing its limits with a five-minute MSN conversation at 3 a.m. on a weeknight was well worth it. After all, we had all individually peeked through our balconies in fear only to find that everyone in our neighbourhoods, having given up on the possibility of sleep, was sitting on their balconies smoking shishas listening to Fayruz on their battery-powered radios, their ironic serenity interrupted only by the bombs falling on our city. These were well worth the laugh with our friends, followed by rather worried discussions on whether the math tests would be cancelled the next day at school. As we still grew older and started to have mobile phones, we shared our account passwords with each other: web-to-sms was the safest and most sure-fire way to let your family know your whereabouts in the immediate aftermath of an explosion (speculating why phone lines would be interrupted immediately after an explosion also made for interesting conversation).

As we entered the final years of our school and the early years of our undergraduate careers, we started to develop affinities with each other without realising the stigma attached to inter-sectarian love. Most of us lost those battles and continued our lives in search of more 'appropriate' partners. We then, most of us, learned to make peace with these barriers, reconstructing the love we had for each other in less controversial but more intimately supportive terms. Through the part time jobs we had during our university years we started to meet a wide range of different people and discussed among ourselves why, when so many of us think and feel so similarly, the space we find ourselves in remains of sectarian exclusionary character. The most-often reached conclusion was that while people like us were the majority, people like them 'owned the streets'[38]. By the time we learned to drive it was already impossible for us to mimic our parents and families by going on day or weekend trips to Syria or Iraq, for instance. The associated influx of extended family members from those countries into Lebanon led us to understand better the reasons behind our families' past trips to these countries. Turns out it wasn't just for holiday, but also to keep in touch with the

[38] For an elaboration on what 'owning the streets' constitutes, see the biographies of any of our current political leaders.

family. We realised that it wasn't our families who for whatever reason decided to live across three different 'nations', rather the lines two white mean, now dead, scribbled on a piece of paper at the turn of last century.

As we graduated from university and cast our sights to borders further afield, we supported each other through countless visa rejections for no apparent reason other than the suspicion that we would 'stay there and not come back'[39]. Once we eventually got to the ‘first world’, we were initially proud to be 'randomly selected' for security checks. Once randomly checked, cleared and welcomed into the first world, we felt on our skins how some people's pupils dilated a little bit too suspiciously upon seeing us and listened in confusion to conversations and debates in which we were described as savages, terrorists, people who ride camels and all manner of other colourful exotic villains.

I include these above three paragraphs not for moral commentary on the way of the world, but to texture the conditions of my - our - own situated experience and existence, giving due weight to the profound in Chavez's (2008) reference to profound shared experience. Every single person represented in this thesis has experienced the above. Some are friends-and-classmates-cum-participants in my research. Others, those who were not part of my childhood, I have been present with and other friends in pubs and restaurants as they recounted their own version of these experiences. To this end, my own experience and thinking on positionality and reflexivity pertain not only to my location in relation to my research participants but also my location in relation to the academy. I trust the research participants, and they trust me; but my positionality and profound shared experience with them leads me to retain a degree of mistrust, "suspicion" in Crang & Cook's (2007) words, towards the academy.

It is here that the merit in engaging with initial debates on positionality and reflexivity becomes clear. Indeed, I found that as the social sciences were beginning to engage with the impossibility of objectivity in social scientific research, there were three main pillars that led us (as academics) to the notion of reflexivity as I experienced it in my research: Gouldner (1973) and his work on the 'underdog', Bourdieu's (2003)

[39] This was at first a particularly-confusing proposition for us: we never wanted to leave in the first place, let alone wanting to leave and staying there.

participant objectivation, and the significant contribution of feminists such as Coffey's (1999) ethnographic self and the feminist-rooted notion of the intimate insider (Taylor, 2011). Below I engage with Bourdieu's (2003) participant objectivation, drawing parallels between his experiences in simultaneously ethnographing his hometown in France and Kabylie and my own positionality in relation to my participants and the academy. I place his work in dialogue with Gouldner's (1973) notion of the underdog and Becker's (1967) epistemic affinity to it. Finally, I expand upon feminist contributions to these debates and make explicit how I draw upon these towards the production of credible and robust knowledge on networks of film production in Beirut. Indeed, during my years as a doctoral student at Edinburgh witnessing only the recent inclusion of portraits of women on the walls of our libraries, I found solace not only in Bourdieu's (2003) struggles with himself but also in the words of women who are still excluded from grand library walls:

> *"My response to racism is anger. I have lived with that anger, on that anger, beneath that anger, on top of that anger, ignoring that anger, feeding upon that anger, learning to use that anger before it laid my visions to waste... My fear of that anger taught me nothing"* (Lorde, 1981, p. 7).

The 'profound' experience I have shared with my participants, then, transcends the field in some respects. I have indeed made films with my participants prior to my ethnography of their lives. I have made these films with them both outside the fieldwork context (when I freelanced in film and photography between 2010 and 2012) and inside it (when I conducted a 'pilot' ethnography of the same network of film production in 2013 towards my MSc dissertation). When considering the pitfalls and advantages of insider research, I believe my previous 'work' with participants (the making of films outside of research) accounts for the advantages while my above-discussed positionality some of the potential pitfalls. In this respect, my reintegration into the lives of my participants was relatively easy (Aguiler, 1981), participants were happy to engage with me in discussions on their working lives (Bell, 2005) and throughout my time in the field I was able to - in Chavez's (2008, p. 481) words - "understand the cognitive, emotional, and/or psychological precepts of participants as well as possess a more profound knowledge of the historical and practical happenings of the field".

An illustrative example of these advantages was when Farah and I reflected upon Assil taking up a film teaching position at a university in the south of Lebanon. Here, Farah confessed that she would not have taken up the position despite her having more experience and knowledge in the film industry: "If there's an opportunity ahead of me I don't think 'how much do I know about the requirements here and how much can I pull this off,' instead I think about what I don't know and think about whether or not what I don't know will prevent me from doing the job well." This subtle nuance between how Farah and Assil approach potential opportunities textured my analysis in the chapter on Production and Patronage where I engage with the decision-making process behind potential repeat collaborations among filmmakers themselves and between filmmakers (producers) and clients (patrons). In this sense it is not my prior knowledge of filmmakers that 'threatened' or impeded my collection and analysis of ethnographic data. Here I would often start conversations with a disclaimer here: "I might ask you questions that you find stupid, referring to things we have done together and things that you would assume I know. But it's still important that we 'repeat' these stories as they help me to retrace and therefore scrutinise the process by which we arrived through *that* shared experience to where we are now." This is a strategy also used by Chavez (2008). Instead, it is the profound experience I have shared with my participants *outside* the realm of film production, and that I have outlined above, that potentially threaten the credibility and validity of my research. But Bourdieu also experienced this turmoil between his "ethnographic self" (Coffey, 1999) and his social position, as Wacquant (2004, p. 389) states :

"... turning his ethnological gaze back onto his native world stimulated Bourdieu to translate his existential disquiet with the 'scholastic posture', rooted in the anti-intellectualist dispositions inherited from his upbringing in a subordinate class and ethnoregional position, into a methodical reflection on the act of objectivation itself, its techniques and its social conditions, that paved the way for elaborating and deploying the stance of epistemic reflexivity that is the trademark of his work and teaching "

Objectivation, Reflexivity and the Underdog

Bourdieu's own reflections on this "existential disquiet" formed perhaps the analytic building blocks in his theorisation on the cleft habitus (see Friedman, 2016; Lahire, 2011). More important for my own research, though, were his recommendations on how to manage this inevitable coupling of self and 'other', of insider and outsider (N. A. Naples, 1996), when the two are conflated. Bourdieu (2003) proposes a rigorous differentiation between the positionality of the 'insider' researcher, as it were, and the participants of the research. In my own research this has translated into an awareness that both my participants and myself, by virtue of our 'profound' shared experience, are located in similar positions in axes of power. These positions are not the same, though. Greene (2014, p. 2), drawing upon Merriam et al. (2001), define positionality as "where one stands in relation to the other", stressing that "positions are relative to the cultural values and norms of both the researcher and participants". In this regard, Bourdieu (2003) touches precisely upon the duality of the notion of positionality: my position in axes of power is similar to my participants but somewhat skewed by my position in relation to the academy as well:

> *"The most difficult thing, then, is not so much to understand them (which in itself is not simple) as it is to avoid forgetting what I know perfectly well besides, but only in a practical mode, namely, that they do not all have the project of understanding and explaining which is mine as researcher; and, consequently, to avoid putting into their heads, as it were, the problematic that I construct about them and the theory that I elaborate to answer it"*
>
> (Bourdieu 2003: 288)

We are all aware of where we stand in the world, but I have to be aware that I do not stand in the same place as my participants: my positionality (shaped as well by my relation to the academy) is different to theirs (in the sense that they do not relate to the academy). It is here that Edward's (2010, p. 18) point on MMSNA facilitating an outsider's view of the network is crystallized in relation to this research. The diagrams T1 and T2 concretely position both myself and the research population in relation to each other - they serve as an additional reminder of the 'similarity' of our positions (in T1, I participated in two out of three web-series) but also of the 'difference' imposed by my ethnography of the network (in T2 I have participated in more projects than anyone else because of my 'outsiderness' as a researcher). It is this subtle state of

'same but different' that I have had to negotiate throughout my research. Naples' (1996, p. 43) assertion that "Insiderness or outsiderness are not fixed or static positions, rather ... shifting and permeable social locations" is particularly relevant here. I am an insider but also an outsider. And my participants know it. Crang and Cook (2007) discuss at length the suspicion with which 'Third World' peoples often regard researchers, for instance. My participants and I have both separately worked as 'fixers' for filmmakers and researchers, but I am aware that we negotiate these 'suspicions' differently, particularly as a result of my positionality as a researcher (outsider) as well as an insider. I am aware, then, that I must not attribute to them how I negotiate these suspicions. This is illustrated through the different problematics my participants and I construct of the more powerful 'other'. Muriel, for instance, lamented at length on how a number of filmmakers in Lebanon have been unable to produce second or third feature films because of the demands placed by foreign producers:

"There is practically no local money to make films with. So we have to go seek funding from producers abroad. But all they are interested in funding is stories about how you and your neighbour come from different sectarian backgrounds whereas maybe the film you want to make, let's say about your relationship with your mother, could be one of the most profound and beautiful films ever produced. Or sometimes they say 'Ok, we will fund this film on two conditions: the main characters have to have different sectarian backgrounds and you have to hire a German DP.[40] "

The parallels become clear here. Muriel's, or my participants', 'suspicions' are not laced with the project of understanding the formation and maintenance of networks of film production in Beirut, rather they are constitutive of their situated experience that I aim to understand. By the same token, it was important for me to understand that my own 'suspicion' in relation to the academy - crystallized in my refusal to a priori establish a power imbalance between researcher and researched[41] by drawing upon terms such as 'subaltern' or engaging in instrumentalist discussions of how my friendships 'served' my data collection - is located on planes separate to my data collection and fieldwork.

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[40] There are parallels to these debates in the 'first world', see for example Barthelemy (2015), but key here is the imposition of particular plots more so than particular crewmembers that Barthelemy most focuses on.

[41] Wacquant (2004: 387-388) also subtly touches upon this by referring to the "'repatriation' of anthropology after the close of the imperial age" and the "disciplinary division between sociology and anthropology"

They are very similar 'suspicions' or positions or processes, but Bourdieu (2003) stresses the importance of not conflating the two by reminding us that 1) the primary driver of ethnographies is "making sense of *other* people's realities" (as per Crang and Cook's (2007, p. 155 - emphasis in original) reading of Bourdieu (2003) and that 2) as researchers we must analytically separate what we learn about ourselves from what we aim to learn about others.

This consideration of Bourdieu's (2003) nuanced contribution to debates on positionality and reflexivity is a necessary one as it most closely reflects my own abrums in the research process. Indeed, Gouldner's (1973, p. 35) manifesto of the underdog, that "taking the underdog's standpoint does indeed contribute to the successful fulfilment of the intellectual obligations that we have as sociologists" shares many characteristics with Bourdieu's (2003) critical approach. Becker (1967, p. 243) also outlines his affinity with Gouldner's (1973) critical epistemology of siding with the less powerful: "When we acquire sufficient sympathy with subordinates to see things from their perspective, we know that we are flying in the face of what "everyone knows." The knowledge gives us pause and causes us to share, however briefly, the doubt of our colleagues." I note, however, that the primary focus at the time of their writing was deviant or criminal cultures (Lumsden 2002, p. 5) where power imbalances between super- and sub-ordinates are translated into visible situated experience. Relying upon their work as representative of my own positionality would unfairly and bluntly dichotomise the world into "goodies" and "baddies" (Hammersley, 2000, p. 11) whereas, as I hope to have demonstrated in my above discussion of my own positionality and that of my participants, the picture is much murkier and opaque than that: the power imbalances are not so readily visible in the case of my own research. Indeed, while I argued in the previous chapter that Bourdieu's (1983) field theory is too blunt an instrument to excavate the more micro-level situated experience of networks of film production in Beirut, here I make the point that Becker's (1967) *methodological* work is too blunt - in the context of my own thesis - to adequately shed light on the invisible imbalances associated to the positionality of both researcher and researched.

Ethics of Representation

Such a profound loyalty and sense of belonging to the participants of this research also imposes a stricter ethics of representation on this thesis. Indeed, there is all too great a wariness, both within myself and my research participants, against reductive orientalist explanatory accounts of life in Beirut. My being a researcher renders me in this instance a politicised outsider: Lebanon has a sensitive relationship with outward migration, despite the positive economic effects of remittances[42] there remains a sense that outward emigrants 'desert' their country. In the lives of my research participants, this is most evident during extended holiday periods when a number of emigrants return to Beirut over the summer, for instance, disrupting the already-busy everyday lives of those who live in the country. Holidays are not always welcomed, as a busy art director friend told me:

> *"It's the season where everybody comes back and every night you have to go out and see your friends. Nobody is cognizant of the fact that we work here and we have our lives here, they leave and then come back for a few days expecting everyone to leave their lives and start entertaining those who have returned."*

There is a two-pronged ethics of representation that crystallizes here: that of representing the country, and of representing the people in it. Returning migrants, such as myself, tend to subscribe to a romanticised vision of the country, perhaps in no small part informed by their experiences abroad: "There's no place like home." But this is often at odds with the experiences of those who live in the country and are confronted by its issues on a daily basis. Just as my positionality, as discussed above, requires me to safeguard against offloading my own "suspicions" (Crang and Cook 2007) onto them and instead understanding their own suspicions, it is also important to represent the everyday social space that is Beirut in their eyes and through their experiences as opposed to my own romanticised lens. But perhaps more importantly on a micro-social level, my deep sense of loyalty and belonging to these people imposes on me a tricky ethics of how to represent them in my thesis by doing as little symbolic violence onto them as possible. (There is a sense of 'doing justice' to their

[42] "Remittances account for 22% of average Lebanese household income and 88% of its savings" (Hourani, 2007)

trust, something I reflect upon in the concluding chapter.) In the first instance, I have refrained from naming people when disclosing of illegal activities[43]. Furthermore, while I draw upon a significant amount of personal information as data, I have made sure not to explicitly name anyone whose potentially sensitive personal information I disclose in the thesis.

Indeed, during the final leg of the write-up phase I repeatedly had serious conversations with the majority of my key participants on their representation in my thesis. In most cases they were quite dismissive of this, but I insistently dragged these out for hours, often boring them. When I asked them if they would like me to give them pseudonyms in my thesis, they asked "why". My response was that this might act as a safeguard against identifying them, to which they often responded with "but you write about Shankaboot, Beirut I Love You and stuff. So if someone really wanted to trace us they would be able to." Their words echo Kadushin's (2005, pp. 140 - 141) discussion of well-known ethical issues in network analysis that do not necessarily have obvious solutions:

> *"In smaller scale qualitative studies, often organization or small community studies, who are the respondents even when given promises of anonymity may be obvious to both potential readers and to the social scientists. The latter often cannot successfully analyze the data without knowing who the respondents are. Eventual publication usually involves changing the names of respondents as well as information such as their age and occupation that might give them away even though some of this background of subjects or respondents may be important to the narrative."*

Perhaps surprisingly, anonymity was not such an issue for my participants, they signalled to me an acceptance of their presence in my thesis, and asked if I have named them in relation to illegal activities. They were, in other words, happy for me to 'benefit' from their lives. After almost forcing this discussion onto them, they asked me again what my opinion was on using their real names. Having deferred a number of times, my cornered response was that I would ideally like to maintain the reality of their personhood in my thesis: "you're real people, this thesis is about real people, whether I like it or not this thesis is about you. People can still trace you if they wanted to, so I don't see the point of pseudonyms. I'd much rather maintain you in

[43] Smoking joints comes to mind here.

your reality." I would always qualify this response by asking them to read a chapter, or even excerpt of a chapter, in which they are most prominent: "No matter how much I describe to you your presence in there, the best way to find out is to read something," I would say. Here, I received two different responses: some expressed an interest in reading the whole thesis, while others I had to almost coerce into reading excerpts of chapters. Both sets of responses, though, rejected the notion that they had to read the thesis to understand and evaluate their representation in it. "I trust you, I trust that you would not want to misrepresent me or anyone of us. Thanks, but I really don't need to read it," was Farah's response, while Denise and Muriel said: "We want to read your thesis because we're interested to see what's in it. You've done this for years now and we're interested in the insight. We trust that you haven't misrepresented us, so forget about that part. Send it to us when it's ready and consider the issue of consent long sorted." This was always a difficult response for me to accept on a number of levels. I know full well, how, for instance, many of the participants in this thesis are keen not to have their photographs shown publicly, and while I haven't provided photographs of them I certainly do not want to unwittingly misrepresent them, *despite* my best efforts not to. Not only would their reading have acted as a secondary screening of the personal material in this thesis, but it would also have given me the opportunity to gauge what they made of some of my arguments. I realised upon reflection that I must respect their trust in me; *insisting* they read my thesis under the guise of consent – when the underlying motivation of this insistence was that I wanted to know what they thought of my work – would have been a subtle betrayal of this trust.

Conclusion: Challenging Populations, Challenging Belongings

Broadly, this chapter has attempted to make explicit the reconciliation of two sets of methodological considerations: 1) arriving at a coherent mixed-methods methodology to 'serve' the theory-informed research questions and objectives of this thesis, and 2) making sense of the inherent politics of my qualitative data collection and analysis. In relation to the first, I have attempted to make explicit the ways in which mixing qualitative and quantitative methods under a realist relational paradigm has been

conducive towards a more robust, textured explanatory account of how networks of film production are formed and maintained in Beirut. Specifically, I discussed the dialogic emergence of three analytic foci to be addressed: the influence of patronage, objects, and relationships. I then discussed more closely the mixed-methods configurations that allow me to grapple with the research objectives underlying each of these three foci, distinguishing between how qualitative methods broach the content, complexity and meaning of relationships while quantitative methods broach the structure of these relationships.

Indeed, the overarching research question "how are networks of film production formed and maintained in Beirut?" can be dissected into three sub-themes, understanding the interaction of which then feeds back to a textured explanatory account of their formation and maintenance. Understanding the role patronage ties play in this required a methodology conducive to identifying and comparing the salient properties in the content of bridging or brokerage ties in the selection phase (RO1), and identifying and comparing changes in the on-set structure of the network as a function of patronage ties (RO2). In relation to objects, it was important to be able to identify salient properties of the production and consumption ties between people and objects and how these mediate relations between producers and potential patrons (RO3), in addition to identifying how the structure and content of production ties between people and objects influence one's self-narratives (RO4). Finally, regarding the totality of relationships that constitute production networks, it was necessary to identify the emergent properties of the repetitive, context-specific but consistently-structured reactivation of production ties (RO5).

I discussed how MMSNA was made possible through the quantitization of the qualitatively-collected relational data, and turned to considerations pertaining the qualitative collection of these data. Here, I made explicit how my insiderness facilitated qualitative data collection but also required me to erect safeguards against the potentially harmful influence of my positionality in relation to my participants and to the academy. I made clear how MMSNA can play a 'grounding' role in this regard, reminding the researcher of one's simultaneous insider and outsider status. I also elaborated upon the translation of my positionality into an ethics of representation: the importance of not romanticising the field and the methodological consequences of

the level of mutual trust between my participants and myself. Crossley and Edwards (2016, 5.5 – emphasis in original) argue:

> "*Crudely put, we believe that the quantitative techniques of SNA are crucial for identifying and measuring the properties of networks and for identifying associations between such properties and wider behaviours and factors that might be regarded either as causes or effects of them* but we believe that *qualitative work is often essential if we are to understand the how and why of such associations.* A proper account of mechanisms necessarily involves both elements."

In the pages below, I *do* relational sociology on the lives of some of my closest friends. For a duration of just over forty thousand words, I take their constitution by those around them as human agents (Pizzorno, 1991, p. 220) that they have trusted onto me as the subject of my research and dissect it into different qualitative and quantitative configurations of "data" to be analysed. How might this processual, ongoing and plural constitution inform debates in cultural sociology, specifically those surrounding the emergent 'excess' of networks and our relationships to things?

Production & Patronage

The primary aim of this chapter is to locate the situated experience of production networks within this ostensibly uncertain, inconsistent and variable cycle of securing project-based work. Virtually anyone with the requisite resources can commission the production of cultural products, while production networks themselves can 'attach' to a wide range of projects. In his own doctoral dissertation on Hollywood musicians, Faulkner (1985, pp. 3 – 4) was critical of the trend at the time to "focus on the media content rather than on its employees, or on the art of popular entertainment rather than on the artists, performers, and technicians," and his words resonate with Lahire's (2011, p. 29) more recent critique on sociology's lack of interest in "life offstage". It is particularly the need (which I outline more closely below) to foreground production as "work", coupled with a curiosity of the 'offstage life' of production networks cyclically attaching and detaching from patronage structures, that forms the intellectual rationale behind this chapter in which I investigate the situated experience of production networks working for a variety of institutions, patrons, and structures of local and regional scale in Beirut. Specifically, I focus my analysis on the following research questions designed with the intention of remaining loyal to the multiple complexities and contingencies of the life of production networks:

- How do the differing expectations of patrons influence or shape the role-based structure of production networks at work and, consequently, the production process itself?

- How does working for a variety of patrons on a project basis influence the formation and maintenance of networks of film production in Beirut?

I answer these by refering to ethnographic data collected from four cases that inform each other: two in food photography, and two in television production. I cross-reference my participant observation with textual data in the form of credits, but it is worth mentioning that this is not always possible: not all credits provide the complete picture of involvement in projects (Becker 1984, pp 9; 18). The objective is to juxtapose the two cases in each subset (photography, television) and unpack certain patterns of network formation, maintenance and adaptation in relation to the

inherently varied and temporal relationships of patronage in cultural production in Beirut using social network analytic techniques. In what follows I briefly discuss the relevant empirical literature to more precisely locate and inform the ensuing analysis, in addition to the theoretical framework on which this chapter is levered. I then briefly present my cases, the rationale behind grouping them into two subsets and discuss the contribution of social network analytic methods in unpacking the research questions of this chapter. Next, I present my three key findings, pertaining to the selection and production phases. These refer to (1) processes of ring-fencing and safeguarding the selection of filmmakers to produce increasingly "complex" cultural goods (Caves, 2000); (2) how the varying the levels of control clients exert on set shapes the production process itself; and of greatest relevance to the project of this thesis (3) how producers' collective evaluation of the experience of working together for their clients has important implications on the formation and maintenance of such networks of cultural production. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of these findings and reflect on their interaction with and contribution to this thesis. The main argument will be that while the formation of production networks is primarily shaped by the patronage ties that bring them to life, their maintenance (and therefore re-formation for new projects) depends on a number of personal and professional contingencies and considerations, including the potential durability of patronage (with client) and personal (with fellow crewmember) ties, the availability of resources, and the malleability of production ties (i.e. with fellow crewmembers) in cyclical attachment and detachment to the more formal structures of patronage.

Locating Production Networks

The professional life of filmmakers and production networks is cyclical. Upon being commissioned or "selected" (Santagata 2010, pp. 15 – 25), they begin by collaboratively conceptualising the cultural product - the "project" according Jones (1996, p. 59) - to be produced with those commissioning the production. Next the project moves to the pre-production phase, where cast and crew negotiate and sign or shake hands on contracts and logistical issues such as the number of 'prep' and 'shooting' days (priced differently) and shooting locations. Equipment hire and shooting dates are 'locked in', and daily shooting schedules in the form of 'call sheets' are distributed to cast and crewmembers. The production phase, where the cultural

product in question is 'shot', is often the shortest and most intense phase of work. Crewmembers who make up the production network take on explicitly clear and specialised roles during this phase through which they (despite often being strangers to one another) execute the extremely complex and "collective" (Faulkner 1985, p. 6) task of obtaining the raw visual and sonic material that in the post-production phase is assembled into the finished cultural product. During montage[44] in post-production, a network consisting of key crewmembers (such as the director) and editor (or editing team), colourist, and sound designer place scenes on a timeline with reference to the script (which in fact guides the whole production process). In its entirety, the time it takes to go from conception to dissemination can vary greatly in length according to the project in question. Hollywood films often take years to produce from start to finish, with the production phase lasting for months; short films and advertisements take less time to shoot, while series are shot cyclically by season (or two seasons). During this intense work period, members of the production network form and establish personal relationships in conjunction with the professional, if for no other reason than the fact that they spend the majority of their time – including extended "downtime" (Bechky 2006, p. 7) – in each other's company during the production phase. Indeed, the social relationships crewmembers form on set are often of greater significance to filmmakers than the films themselves, as Muriel illustrates: "After you make the film, you get paid and the film goes out. What remains from it is the memory of how it was made, not how good the film was."

Then the production network disperses, with some members retaining their newly established friendships and others not. When the next project comes along, the whole process is repeated. Whatever the next project, production networks, often fluid by nature since they do not retain all members (and others are brought in to replace their roles) adapt to the expectations and guidelines set by those commissioning them. Kadushin (1976, p. 771) characterises this adaptation as production networks being "draped around" more formal network structures (of patronage). This cyclical attachment and detachment to more formal structures[45] does not necessarily take place throughout all phases of cultural production: some networks are just hired to

[44] There is a slight nuance between the connotations of 'editing' and 'montage'. The latter, from the French verb monter, to 'bring up', signifies the 'construction' of a story in film. The former is a simpler allusion to the manipulation of images or a series of images.
[45] I retain Kadushin's (1976, p. 771) use of the term "formal" here to stress that it is production networks that adapt to patronage and not the other way around.

shoot, others just to edit. Much like the careers of filmmakers, this "collective to an unusual extent" (Faulkner 1985, p. 6) process of draping around formal structures, is an "erratic process, with quite a range of possible outcomes" (Faulkner and Anderson, 1987, p. 887).

Workers in project-based filmmaking labour markets are characterised as flexibly specialised (Christopherson, 2008; Christopherson and Storper, 1989; Storper and Christopherson, 1987): they undertake a variety of roles across shorter-term projects (camera operator in one project, camera assistant the next). Based on their statistical analysis of employment figures in Hollywood, Christopherson and Storper (1989, pp. 345 – 346) argue:

"Even within production occupations, we observed significant divisions between core and peripheral work forces. A peripheral worker earns a high hourly wage but has a "blue-collar" standard of living. A core worker earns a high annual income and has a dense network of social relationships at work, as well as security and status."

According to Christopherson and Storper (1989), uncertainty was less of a problem for core workers who had little trouble finding new contracts, unlike peripheral workers. Separately but relatedly, Jones (1996, pp. 63 - 67) argues that boundaryless project-based careers follow three phases: 1) socialisation into the industry, 2) building reputations and making contacts, 3) maintaining the career and balancing it with personal needs. This provides insight to the core / periphery structure of the labour market. Followed by attempted mobility from periphery to core in the first two stages, Jones alludes to filmmakers 'taking stock' after attaining a degree of stability and attempting to balance the professional with the personal. Indeed, it is Faulkner and Anderson (1987 p. 887) who perhaps best characterise filmmaking careers without imposing a periphery-to-core direction:

"Building a career line is an uncertain and often erratic process, with quite a range of outcomes possible in the form of (a) continuity of contracts over a period of time and (b) a range of recurrent ties with many and different kinds of people in the business."

Mobility towards the 'core,' then, is achieved over time through the (successful) production of projects (cf Strandvad (2015) on the secondary agency of portfolios). Wei's (2012, p. 462) argument that filmmakers manage the "fundamental tension" between maintaining their "artistic identities" while compromising "their tastes and

values to accommodate commercial demands" (ibid) by engaging in identity work resonates particularly well with this movement towards the core, as does Jones' (1996) description of boundaryless filmmaking careers being "crafted" (ibid p. 63). Filmmakers might not always enjoy making the films they make, but recognise that they don't always have to do so.

Freelancing in Social Network Markets

As Kadushin (1976, p. 771) points out, networks of cultural production are "draped around" more formal structures. With the focus being production networks, i.e. the producers, an adequate lens through which to view the social space of production work becomes necessary. The approach most loyal to the situated experience of cultural workers is Potts et. al.'s (2008) social network markets definition based on demand and supply. This approach does not a priori prescribe any characteristics on those commissioning production, allowing to engage with formal structures that production networks drape around empirically:

> *"The standard industrial classification system was developed over half a century ago when the economy could be categorized much more readily than now by the type of industrial activity in which a firm is engaged and the nature of its material inputs and outputs. Since then, however, the economic system has become considerably more complex and service-oriented and the creative industries have risen and developed into this space" (Potts et. al. 2008, p. 168).*

Bechky (2006; 2002) refers in passing to the complexity of the institutional context surrounding film production, discussing briefly the difference between films produced by unionised and non-unionised crewmembers. Bielby and Bielby (2002) make similar references to the various forces at play when writing for Hollywood film and TV. Coe (2000), meanwhile, discusses how the international (Hollywood) and local (indigenous) markets shape the Vancouver film industry. Separately, while Born's (2003; 2002) ethnographies of the BBC and Channel 4 juxtapose cultural production work with the institutions that commission it, their relevance here is diminished by the fact that the cultural workers in question were predominantly 'in-house' staff as opposed to freelancers. The significance of a social network markets approach for this chapter is particularly apparent when considering the freelance nature of the production networks studied in this thesis, and resonates with the boundaryless-ness of flexibly

specialised filmmaking careers: freelance production networks 'get' or 'take on' projects commissioned by patrons through weak ties (ie ties that bridge distinct social networks) Granovetter (2005; 1983; 1973) or brokers and structural holes (ie people whose structural position allows them to 'broker' information) Burt (2004; 1976). Adopting a social network markets approach provides sufficient analytic space to consider the variation in logics and stylistic conventions per project, but also operationalises the influential role those commissioning production (the patrons) play in the production context (and thus on production networks). My chapter aims to contribute to this knowledge framework with an account of how production networks, as 'free radicals', bind and unbind to a variety of patrons, each with their own social and cultural specificities and interests, on a project basis.

Social Network Analysis and the Notion of Equivalence

The production process of films (and indeed photoshoots) is necessarily distributed among the temporal phases of conception, preparation, execution and post-production. Santagata (2010, pp 15 - 25) refers to six phases of cultural production: selection of artists; conception; production; conservation; distribution; consumption. Krätke (2002), meanwhile, takes a more film-focused approach represented. For the purposes of this chapter, I draw upon Krätke's (2002, p. 31) representation of the temporalities of film production but retain Santagata's (2010) reference to the selection process of artists or producers. It should be noted that this representation draws upon Hollywood role naming conventions, and that there are often minor changes in the ways roles are represented: in TV, a producer often does the job of a director in film, for example. For the purposes of this chapter, however, it is important to retain the knowledge that while naming conventions of roles change from television to short films to advertising to cinema, on-set roles and expectations remain largely the same: irrespective of being a 'producer' in television or 'director' in film, the person in question would still be doing the same job of communicating with the cast while directing the crew.

It is possible through social network analysis to isolate and analyse each phase of the production process by looking at the structural properties of the production network in question, thus gaining a better understanding of how these differently named roles

actually play out on set. I operationalise the network through a quantitizing strategy (Hollstein, 2014, p. 17; 2011) whereby qualitative ethnographic data is converted to social network data. Where possible, I triangulate these with the credits of the projects I engage with. This mixed-methods approach provides robust representations of the network that would not be possible if I were only referring to textual credit data. To illustrate using some of the empirical cases analysed below, the menus of restaurants do not come with a credits roll at the end, naming all those involved in the production of those photos. Similarly, not all crewmembers are represented in the credits rolls of TV productions. An understanding of the goings on of the network complemented by textual data therefore provides the most robust results.

Relations in the networks below are defined as those of reporting: who reports to whom in this particular production instance. The resulting ties between individuals take the form of directed arcs among crewmembers. I restrict my analysis to two phases of the production process: selection of artists and production. I approach the selection phase qualitatively, drawing upon ethnographic data on the individual attributes of those involved, as well as the selection process itself. For the production phase, however, I rely on a set of network analytic techniques that 'divide' or partition actors (crewmembers) in the network into equivalence classes based on the similarity of the number and structure of their ties. The aim of these is to shed light on some key characteristics of production networks pertaining to the distribution of roles on set, with roles defined as positions in the network that have sets of expected behaviours associated with them (Burt, 1976; Ferligoj et al., 2011).

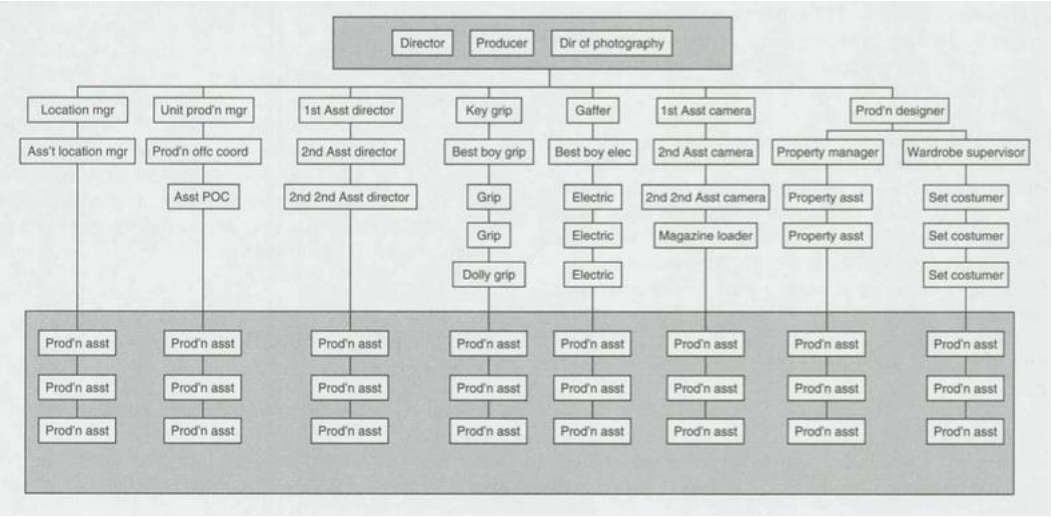

Figure 14: Bechky's (2006, p. 8) representation of the distribution of roles on a film set

The idea of equivalence, first proposed by Lorrain and White (1971) and subsequently developed by Breiger et al. (1975) and Burt (1976), is based on the principle that if two nodes in a network have similar patterns (number and structure) of relationships, then they occupy equivalent positions and play similar social roles in the network (Hanneman and Riddle, 2005). Intuitively, the idea can be applied to Bechky's (2006) representation of roles in figure 14 above: the director, producer, and director of photography all relate to crewmembers in the same way, while everyone else in the crew relates to production assistants in the same way. Another illustration could be managers in a restaurant franchise. Each manages, say, a branch of 15 people, and each is in turn managed by a single regional manager. The regional manager would constitute one equivalence class, the branch managers another, and the workers still another.

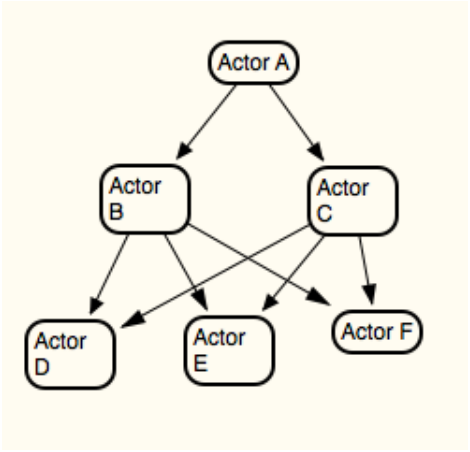

Figure 15: Structural Equivalence

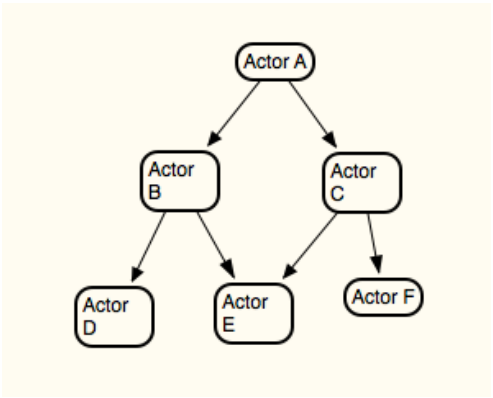

Figure 16: Automorphic Equivalence

There are three 'types' of equivalence: two actors are said to be structurally equivalent if they share the same number of incoming and outgoing ties with the same actors. This is illustrated in figure 15 above: Actors B and C can be said to be structurally equivalent since they both share a single incoming tie with the same Actor A and three outgoing ties with the same actors D, E, and F. There are three structurally equivalent classes in the above figure: Actor A is in a class on its own, B and C another class, and then D, E and F a third class.

It is, however, very rare to see such a 'strong' equivalence in empirical networks, and therefore looser definitions of equivalence have been developed. To this end, the idea of automorphic equivalence requires actors to have the same number of ties but not necessarily to the same actors as illustrated in figure 16 above: "automorphically equivalent nodes are identical with respect to all graph theoretic properties" and

would be “structurally indistinguishable” if we remove node labels from the network (Wasserman and Faust 1994, p. 472). Actors B and C are said to be automorphically equivalent since they share two outgoing ties but not with the same actors.

The final and ‘loosest’ type is that of regular equivalence, illustrated by figure 17 below taken from Hanneman and Riddle (2005). This is the ‘loosest’ type in that for actors to form an equivalence class they do not have to share the same number of ties, and those ties do not have to be with the same actors. Using the restaurant franchise example again, branch managers are in regular equivalence even though some branches have more employees than others. There are three regular equivalence classes in the figure below: Actors E, F, G, H and I are in regular equivalence because they each share one tie with actors in the second equivalence class (B, C, D). Actors B, C and D are in regular equivalence because they share a single tie with an actor in the first equivalence class (A) and ties with the third equivalence class (E, F, G, H, and I). Actors B, C, and D are regularly equivalent despite not sharing the same number of ties to the third equivalence class: what matters here is that they are all tied to the third equivalence class, irrespective of how they are tied or the number of ties they have to the third equivalence class. Actor A, in is in an equivalence class of its own by virtue of it sharing ties with the second equivalence class (B, C, and D) and having no ties to the third equivalence class (E, F, G, H and I). Returning briefly to the example of restaurant branch managers to illustrate the three types of equivalence, managers would be structurally equivalent if they report to the same boss and ‘manage’ the same employees. Automorphic equivalence would be when branch managers report to the same number of bosses and manage the same number of employees. Regular equivalence would be when branch managers report to a boss and manage employees, irrespective of who the boss and employees are and how many of them there are.

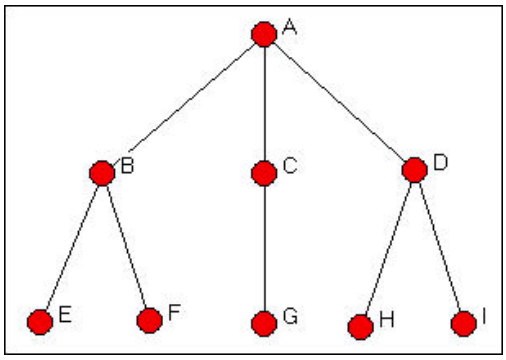

Figure 17: Regular Equivalence (Hanneman and Riddle 2005)

In what follows in this chapter I identify and analyse regular equivalence classes in the production phase of food photoshoots and television productions using a mixed methods social network analytic approach and an ethnographic understanding of the situated instances of production. By pinpointing which groups reported to which groups during the production phase of the cases, I aim to show that the variation in those who commission the production process from one project to another imposes analytically significant changes to the production network, the production process, and most importantly the expected set of behaviours of those hired to 'do' the production. In other words, I try to understand more closely how producer role expectations change from one project to another, how producers manage these changes, and why they do it. Arguing that 'each project is different' is a common-sensical and intuitive enough point to make, but it is one that adds texture to our understanding of the formation and maintenance of networks of film production. The production networks of more high-budget projects might well be larger in size than small-scale, independent productions, but underlying these surface-level changes are subtler, more complex differences that are relevant to the situated experience of production networks and their members.

Context – Cases

I specifically refer in this chapter to four cases that can be grouped into two subsets: two in food photography, and two in television production. In both subsets the projects selected follow a similar dynamic: a small-scale project that was successfully 'delivered' and a subsequent larger-scale project. While I discuss in the next chapter how preceding projects contribute to being awarded subsequent, larger scale ones, here I focus on the diversity of patronage relations within the same genre or field (food photography / television production) and how production networks manage this diversity on a project basis. In what follows I briefly describe and contextualise each of the four projects, starting by those in food photography.

Fatso's

While my fieldwork was aimed at ethnographing networks of film production in Beirut, the first project I participated in was in food photography: shooting the pictures of

food that were to populate the menu. Mikey, the owner of a new diner-style restaurant in Beirut, contacted me on the recommendation of an old friend, Imad, who had requested I "take care of him price-wise". The restaurant itself was a small rectangular space conveniently facing a student accommodation building for the American University of Beirut (AUB). Mikey hosted a radio show at a pub-cum-cultural institution that supported local artists called Radio Beirut, which was a short walk from my own flat in Mar Mikhael. When he called after Imad's initial contact, we agreed to meet there before his radio show. I walked to the meeting at Radio Beirut, where we agreed on a second meeting at Fatso's to dot the Is and cross the Ts (orally, without any written dots or crosses – there was to be no taxation here) for the photoshoot. I stayed around for another beer, making small talk with some of the other people I knew at the bar (who Mikey also knew, and I wanted Mikey to know that I knew them too), and then I dialled Farah's (my production partner) number on my walk back home.

The second meeting with Mikey, which Farah came along to as well, was at 2 pm at Fatso's. Our first impression of the place was that he was trying to compete with Roadster Diner, a well-established franchise in Beirut. We entered the place and were greeted by "Invincible Head Chef Hussein," who introduced himself as such to Farah. He wanted to look confident and professional. Mikey arrived late (he told us that he had to pay a $5,000 fine for hiring a Syrian person as his delivery driver - the amount surely an exaggeration in order to drive our price down, the fine not). His demeanour in Fatso's was markedly different than at Radio Beirut: a radio show host and part of the in-crowd with the hip-hoppers in one place, a boss and business owner in another. I told him to take his time with his 'meetings' with staff (he mostly discussed what went on during the day with his floor manager - a young female university student), and that Farah and I would try some of the items on the menu to see how they are presented while we waited. We ordered a main dish each and a side of "Pepperoni Pizza Fries" (the only vegetarian option, provided the pepperoni be removed) to share. When serving the dishes, Invincible Hussein remarked that he is still finalising dish presentation. "I'm going to give them all a workshop on how to present the food and then I'm headed off to Saudi Arabia[46]." Mikey then did the courteous thing of asking what we thought of the food. Farah remarked that there were no vegetarian options

[46] The implication being that he was headed off to more lucrative jobs

on the menu. Mikey's response was that he was thinking of introducing a Slim (to contrast with Fatso's) menu for "healthy eating," adding that he had found a bean burger recipe online that he would like to incorporate as the vegetarian option on the menu.

Farah and I had agreed to open negotiations at $500 and be willing to go as low as $350. The project was becoming less and less about being professionals and making money and more about just getting a job and having a project to do as a stepping stone towards bigger things. I opened with the $500, he countered with $300. I settled for $300, with Farah giving me subtle looks of admonishment only her and I would understand. In the end, we split the $300 into $125 each, with $50 going to Bonnie and Clyde, the production company we wanted to establish. We did the photoshoot on the 11th of January on one of the six booths that made up the seating space of the restaurant. Mikey had stopped placing two additional tables outside after being hit with a municipal fine for doing so without the necessary permits.

Tayyeb

The second project in question was arranged in similar fashion to Fatso's. Amine, a friend who runs a graphic design company, said he recommended me to a former intern whose brother was looking for a photographer to shoot the menu for his new restaurant. Both Farah and I were initially hesitant to pursue the project, wary of not repeating "the Fatso's experience" (which we thought was clouded in unprofessionalism on Mikey's part). When probed for further detail, Amine said he had no information on what the potential project would be. A few days after I cautiously expressed interest to Amine, Hassan emailed asking for a portfolio and a 'ballpark' description of pricing methods. His emails provided very little information about the project itself, but, seemingly impressed with my reply, he asked to schedule a meeting. Sitting in front of Hassan's well built, obviously gym frequenting imposing figure, Farah and I were surprised by his opening question: "Do you know Barbar?"

Barbar is a restaurant chain that serves Lebanese and western sandwiches and dishes at an affordable price. It is a cultural institution in many ways: young people often make a stop there on their way back home from nights out, congregating with their cars in front of the 'No Parking' sign on a main road connecting East and West Beirut. In the morning, students and workers pick up a quick breakfast during (and

contributing to) rush hour traffic. At lunch, workers meet there with their sandwiches and sodas on the sidewalk, the footfall again contributing to Beirut traffic. Unlike Fatso's, which opened in January 2015 and closed by April, Barbar has been there for as long as I can remember: Imad and I would walk to there for a man'oushe (a popular Lebanese breakfast pastry) and juice before taking the after school bus back home, all for 1,000 LBP (around 30p).

Upon further investigation, I discovered that the Barbar franchise has branches all over Lebanon that do not always retain the "Barbar" name. Hassan's family, the owners, change the name of the branch to associate more closely with different sections of the social fabric in Beirut: "Barbar" is the prevalent name in the popular student area of Hamra in West Beirut. In East Beirut Achrafieh, the name was different to dissociate the restaurant from the 'low-brow' Barbar brand. It also helped financially: changing the name meant the other branches could be registered and licensed as standalone restaurants instead of branches of the Barbar franchise, thus saving Hassan's family a significant amount of money[47]. Tayyeb was one such branch that the family were opening ahead of the summer season, located on the highway linking south Lebanon with Beirut and aiming to catch Beiruti beach-goers on their way back home in the summer. As the relationship with Hassan developed, I realised that in the family-run Barbar business Hassan was the one tasked with getting Tayyeb off the ground in time for summer and Ramadan. During our first meeting, Hassan showed us on his phone the menu design and "look" proposed by The Farm, the design agency behind Tayyeb. The menu was consistent with all the other restaurants the family had, but Hassan wanted a quirkier, modern twist to the aesthetic, perhaps in reference to the audience he was trying to attract to the restaurant. Farah and I met with Hassan twice, providing portfolios, discussing timelines, locations, and aesthetic. We confirmed a four-day photoshoot from the ninth to the 12th of March. The emphasis on a particular aesthetic, in addition to the more professional nature of the project (compared to Fatso's at least) made us contact Remie, an art director common friend who was taking some time off of TV ads at the time. She had worked with food before and would be able to produce the style we had agreed upon with Hassan. Farah was already booked for a month on a web-series; it was her idea for us to bring

[47] Here I should note that, like Mikey, Hassan also preferred to keep the tax people out of our arrangement.

Remie in as the art director: “She’s very good and very professional, and we would still need a good art director even if I (Farah) was available.”

Hassan provided a location very close to the main Barbar branch on Spears street (figure 18). During our final pre-production meeting there with Remie, we were surprised to find out that his family owned the whole building, in addition to the two buildings behind and adjacent to the restaurant. We requested a chef, two runners for camera and two runners for art direction for the photoshoot, Hassan willingly obliged. The figure below belies the size of Barbar’s ‘behind the scenes’ operation. There was a courtyard between the white building and another one behind it, where there were industrial ovens and freezers. The restaurant itself spanned two floors from the back, and I counted at least 20 people working there at any time, day or night. The seven am to seven pm photoshoot was to be held in a newly-built and as yet uninhabited building owned by Hassan’s family. The concierges of the three buildings (the white one, the one behind it and the newly built adjacent building) were Syrian refugees given a place to stay and work by Hassan’s family. The total budget of the four-day photoshoot was $2,700, comprising a $700 production budget on top of the production fee of $500 per day.

Figure 18: Barbar branch on Spears street, adjacent to the Tayyeb shooting location

Zimam al-Mubadara (Social Initiatives)

During the summer of 2013, while I was on fieldwork for my MSc dissertation, Farah and I were approached by a bike messenger startup in Beirut called Deghri Messengers (Deghri means direct in Arabic) to shoot a promotional film for their impending launch. For this, we pooled friends and resources together to make a three-and-a-half minute 'promo' for the web called "Send it by Bike". Couriers were an attractive topic at the time, owing to the success of a previous web-series called Shankaboot that Farah and I had worked on. The streets of Beirut are teemed with people delivering food, groceries, and even arguileh (shisha) on mopeds riding between cars and through notorious traffic jams. Amidst the standstill is a cacophony of frustrated drivers sounding their horns in anger, subverting the tension by blasting Arabic or western music from their custom-installed sub-woofers, or - for the minority who can afford to have the air-conditioning on at all times - engaging in social commentary through their mobile phones in relative isolation from the weather and chaos around. Mopeds are best able to navigate this commuting arrangement, scurrying through wonky lanes, 'betweening' past cars' side view mirrors, drivers' cigarette-holding suspended left hands, and rhythmically using their screeching breaks to urgently halt their slaloms. Farah I decided to follow in Shankaboot's stylistic footsteps, and called ourselves Bonnie and Clyde in so doing.

A few weeks after returning to Beirut, for PhD fieldwork this time, Farah was contacted on a WhatsApp group of Harley Davidson enthusiasts by Wissam, who ran a production house called Road2Films. Cynthia, a producer who co-owned Road2Films, explained during our meeting that they would like us to produce an episode for an Al-Jazeera TV show called "Zimam al-Mubadara" (Social Initiatives). "We really liked your street-style camera movements and would like to give you the opportunity to do this for Al-Jazeera," she said. Amal, the in-house production assistant, then explained that the episode in question was about a teacher who 'took the initiative' of encouraging Lebanese schoolchildren to write more in Arabic (an initiative creatively named 'Oktob bel-Arabi', meaning 'write in Arabic'). The producers were adamant that we undertake the project "from A to Z", that is pre-production,

production and post-production of the episode[48]. "Usually these episodes are shot in one day, two max, and then we allow up to one week for editing and completing them." It was a potentially interesting opportunity for Farah and myself to feature on Al-Jazeera, and after the meeting we immediately started to think of calligrapher friends to brainstorm ideas with despite the poor payment on offer. The budget for the project had a non-negotiable ceiling of $750 that included pay for an on-set production assistant. When Farah noted that the budget for "Send it by Bike", the short film on the back of which they contacted us, was $3,000, Cynthia's response pointed to the murky complexities of production being outsourced twice (first from Al-Jazeera to Road2Films, and them from Road2Films to freelance filmmakers):

"As a production house, we receive a little bit less than that per Mubadara episode, but you have to understand that we cannot afford to pay you that much because, as a production house, we have to set aside money to pay all our lawyers and accountants. We were like you once, and we wish we still were, but you can't imagine how complicated it is to run a production house."

The 'Oktob bel-Arabi' project fell through, however, when the "talent" stopped returning Amal's phone calls to arrange shooting dates. But Road2Films soon came back to us with another topic: The Lebanese Centre for Haemophilia. At the second time of asking, Farah and I endured another round of three-hour meetings over a five-to-seven-minute episode where Amal would brief us then make us wait for Cynthia, who would then repeat Amal's words and make us wait for Wissam, who would then repeat the simple brief for a third time before returning us to Amal for a final, fourth, repetition of the brief. Amal was our main point of contact with Road2Films, and had been in touch with the Lebanese Centre for Haemophilia for a few months now, developing an emotional attachment to the project. Unlike myself, Farah - a more seasoned filmmaker - was very skilled at maintaining an interested face throughout the repetitiveness of Amal's brief during meetings.

Zimam al-Mubadara was a series Al-Jazeera broadcast on Saturday afternoons, with repeats on Sunday and Tuesday mornings. Aimed at a socially-conscious audience, the family friendly series showed short reports on various social initiatives from around

[48] This kind of arrangement is common in low-budget productions. Instead of paying crewmembers their daily rates, producers agree a 'package deal' for the whole project (cf Gerber and Childress, 2017).

the Arab world. The Haemophilia centre was not necessarily a great fit with the brief of the show as it was more institution than initiative. Amal, as such, was keen to stress some points on format. Highlighting it as an 'initiative' was among the most important, in addition to ensuring an emotional tone essentialising patients and a happy ending denouement in which the 'initiative' solved all the problems through passion, hard work and dedication. It is worth mentioning here that despite encouraging us to "be creative" with the aesthetic of the episode and to "use your street-style", the producers were not happy with our first draft. We were encouraged to arrange a second, unpaid, shooting day in order to gather more "action shots" that followed the "TV language" of "spoon feeding the audience." For a regular interview scene, this entailed showing the interviewee walking into the location, sitting down, commencing the interview and then leaving the room upon its conclusion. Farah and I thus conducted a second (half) shooting day, this time without the production assistant, that consisted almost purely of "talents" (characters) walking in and out of rooms. In the final edit (which was thankfully accepted), we also addressed Amal's concerns that our initial draft was not "emotional enough" by starting and ending the seven-minute with footage of a seven-year-old Haemophilia patient playing the soundtrack to Disney's "Frozen" on the piano at home. This made Amal tear up, much to our ironic amusement. Wei's (2012) ethnographic work on artists distancing their artistic identities from economically-necessary but uninspiring work accompanied me throughout this particular project.

MBC's "The X-Factor"

At the other end of my time in the field, as I gave a colleague in Beirut advice on how to get to Aberdeen for a conference, I received an international call from Dubai. I duly excused myself and answered the 2:30 pm call to a producer called Muna, who told me about how she urgently needs a producer for a two-day shoot in Beirut starting at 5:30 pm. Despite beginning to wean myself off of fieldwork by that time, I thought this to be potentially too valuable an ethnographic experience and agreed to undertake the project. After all, it was not every day that Dubai came calling with work. Muna and I urgently exchanged international phone calls from 2:30 to 3:30 that afternoon, with her assistant Sushmita emailing me briefing documents and copying in some other names whom I assumed were MBC bureaucrats. The job was a two-night

shoot around members of a band called 'The Five'. The crew was hired, band's itinerary set, studio spaces booked (they were recording two singles for their upcoming album), but the producer had pulled out at the last minute. The emails drafted by Sushmita started introducing me, "Arek - the producer," to "Joseph the camera operator" from Twin Productions and "Georges who will coordinate everything on the ground for you." The job they were asking me to do seemed to be more 'director' than 'producer' to me: tell the crew how and what to film, tell the cast how and what to act, but naming conventions in television are different to those in film (cf Cluley, 2012).

As I drove to the shooting location, one eye on the traffic-jammed road and another on my phone reading briefing documents, to meet my crew at 5:00 pm, Muna called again to ask about payment. "For something like this I'd normally charge around three, four hundred a day," I said, "but I mean this is very short notice…" She replied: "Yeah. Normally we have a budget of around two hundred and fifty, three hundred a day for this kind of job, but yes this is very short notice and we are keen to work with you, you came with a glowing recommendation, so how about we agree for $750 for the two days? I can send you the details over email." That was indeed a lot of money for a project I had to do very little - if any - prep for and in which my job was to ask some people some questions, give them directions, and tell other people to film them. I cancelled my plans for the night in anticipation of a gruelling twelve-hour shoot, telling friends I had just got a TV gig with MBC (cf Neff et al., 2005). Neither shoot lasted for more than six hours, though.

- "I just have to direct the shooting, right? No post-production?"

- "No. Joseph will send the footage to our in-house editors in Dubai for post-production. You just have to produce the content."

The job was to follow "The Five," a band who were in the final stages of the Arab world iteration of the X-Factor franchise hosted by MBC, as they recorded two singles for their upcoming album. One of these was to be recorded in studios owned by Studiovision, a regional TV production company partnered with Lebanese and regional television channels. The other was to be recorded the next day at a studio privately owned by the composer of the second single, pianist Michel Fadel, who had incidentally played at a charity event for the Lebanese Haemophilia Centre and mentored the 7-year-old pianist we featured for AlJazeera. I was asked to hold

informal and random looking interviews with the music producers, members of the five, and ensure that studio recording time was filmed. I was required to constantly update Muna on the 'content' we were gathering via WhatsApp, and I used the opportunity to ask her who had recommended me. Serena, who I had met once at Muriel's house a few weeks earlier, admitted in her reply to my grateful message that it was indeed Muriel who had recommended me to her: "I didn't do it! I asked Muriel and she gave me your name!"

Having briefly presented the four production instances that form the empirical basis of this chapter, I now discuss the role of social network analytic methods in investigating the role of crewmembers and production workers against the above presented 'formal' structural backdrops. I begin the next section with an explanation of the specific methods used and then discuss the contribution of social network analysis towards the findings of this chapter.

Findings

Brokerage: Ring-Fencing Selection

The presence of a broker in both food photography cases is evident. In the Fatso's case, Imad answered Mikey's call in search of photographers and then called me, after which I called Farah to inform her that we probably have a project on our hands. In the case of Tayyeb, the brokerage process was a little bit more complicated. Hassan's sister enquired to Amin about photographers ("She just called me and asked if I knew any good food photographers, said her brother needed one," Amin told me over the phone). The sister then relayed Amin's response to Hassan, who in turn contacted me. From my end of the phone conversations, upon receiving Amin's call I informed Farah that we have another project on our hands. My phone calls to Farah signalled the potential activation of a production network to be 'draped' around Fatso's, then Barbar, in both cases due to the establishment of patronage ties between 'institution' and production network for the duration of a particular project.

The 'dual' brokerage of Tayyeb (where Hassan's sister brokered Amine's own brokerage) in comparison to the informal, simple process Fatso's went through is already significant of how the different backgrounds of Tayyeb and Fatso's impact the production process even from the conception phase. In the Fatso's case, Imad knew

why Mikey was enquiring about a food photographer. In the case of Tayyeb, however, the lack of information Amin had on why Hassan's sister asked him for a photographer ensured a degree of anonymity and secrecy from Hassan's end. Indeed, Hassan mentioned to Farah and I that his family owned Barbar only when we met face-to-face at a café, after I had sent him my portfolio and we had conversed over email. The contrast between how these two separate brokerage ties were established is significant: Mikey's new and as yet unknown restaurant meant there was no pre-existing, tried-and-tested method for him to hire photographers, and so he was free (read autonomous) to go about hiring as he pleased, or saw fit with his little experience in hiring photographers or commissioning photoshoots. His interests in this case were to a) ensure that whatever photographer he is hiring is capable of producing presentable photos and b) that the budget be kept at a minimum. Moreover, as a broker Imad is not particularly experienced in the world of food photography. Having commissioned photo-shoots for his band and through his work at Red Bull Music, however, he would have had a number of able photographers he could refer to Mikey. As things stood, Imad gave me a call because he knew I was able and that my own motivations were not to make money out of projects but to do them for research purposes. By contrast, Amin the broker who ran his own graphic design company was already more attuned to the specificities of food photography and himself had an interest in recommending an able photographer to promote his own design knowledge. By recommending a photographer who knows of food photography conventions that facilitate the graphic design process of including the photos in the menu, Amin would demonstrate to the commissioning entity his own skillset as a graphic designer. It is worth at this juncture to take stock of what Burt (2004, p. 351) called the "vision advantage", whereby brokers - due to their being able to "see early, see more broadly, and translate information across groups" - can benefit from their position as brokers. While Amine benefited by indirectly promoting his design company, Imad benefited by committing Fatso's as a caterer for Red Bull music events at terms favourable to Imad and Red Bull.

From Hassan's perspective, asking his junior graphic designer sister find able photographers was a way of ensuring a certain quality of recommendations. Drawing upon professional networks of graphic design, his sister would not only get good recommendations but would also be able to curate those recommendations herself: "Have they shot food before? / Have they shot menus before?" The rather more ring-

fenced approach to sourcing recommendations is indicative of a changing institutional landscape that production networks engage with on a project basis. Hassan's, and indeed his family's, tried-and-tested method of ring-fencing the brokerage process is indicative of previous experience in hiring photographers, dealing with graphic designers, and an awareness of the forces at play upon the Barbar business: he needed to ensure as much as possible that the photographs would be able to provide a certain aesthetic quality suited to his business. Hassan and his family were thus able to place effective safeguards around the Tayyeb photoshoot project, undoubtedly informed by the experience of managing one of Lebanon's largest restaurant chains for many years. This is evidenced by his request for a mood-board to be produced (a visual document that outlines the stylistic properties of projects) according to a clear and explicit brief to be 'shaaby' (popular) aesthetic with a "modern twist", the allocation of a production budget for props, restaurant staff as assistants during the photoshoot, and his stipulation that I present the photographs to him and The Farm (the agency designing Tayyeb).

There is a similar pattern of safeguarding the selection process in accordance with the interests of patrons in the television production cases. The relative informality of the brokerage process for the Mubadara episode can be connected to a number of factors related to the running of the production house. Road2Films were initially under the impression that Farah and I were recent university graduates and expressed that through Mubadara they support "young filmmakers," encouraging them to shoot episodes "with their own style." Indeed, aside from repeatedly reminding us to "show the action" and to adhere to the overall structure of the story, there were little requirements pertaining to how the episode was to be shot. But their targeting of young filmmakers at a lower production budget is indicative of a strategy that extends beyond mere encouragement. For Road2Films, their economies-of-scale strategy of charging around $3,000 per episode from AlJazeera and then themselves outsourcing production at a third of that price was a means of funnelling money into the maintenance of the production house. Moreover, their employment of different producers for each episode (we were not asked to make another episode despite their earlier offers of repeat collaboration) suggests a strategy to retain AlJazeera's business by providing them with structurally sound episodes that were also stylistically "fresh" from one another. By imposing the $750 per episode cap for crewmembers, Road2Films also indirectly encouraged shorter production cycles. "A couple of days to

prep, one day to shoot, and one week max to edit" was the proposed timeline. "We don't want you to work for a whole two weeks on each episode because we can't afford to pay you for that." This allowed them to produce multiple episodes in a short amount of time and thus to be ahead of the delivery schedule of episodes. As such, if Farah and I had failed to produce an acceptable product, Road2Films would have hired two younger, 'fresher' filmmakers from the budget initially allocated to us without coming under pressure from AlJazeera to deliver on time. The abundance of filmmakers interested to take on such low budget work was partly due to the opportunity to include the very recognisable AlJazeera name to CVs and portfolios. This was not quite an unpaid internship, but resembles some of the structural exploitation-by-design of young cultural producers (cf Shade and Jacobson, 2015). It could well be argued that Road2Films' commissioning of young filmmakers to produced Mubadara episodes relied on Burt's (2004) of vision advantage: the production house was only 'translating' information from AlJazeera to freelance filmmakers and in the process using this brokering position between AlJazeera and freelancers to their advantage by generating income for the production house.

The selection process for MBC's X-Factor, however, provides a stark contrast to taking a punt on a filmmaker who shares a love for Harley Davidsons. Before being contacted, my potential as a rushed producer for MBC passed through two knowledgeable safeguarding actors in Serena and Muriel. Serena is a senior film producer in Dubai with a Lebanese background, Muriel an award-winning, well-respected cinematographer in Beirut. From Muna's end, it would be safe to assume that any recommendation by Serena would be of a certain quality. For Serena, in turn, who had at the time been in Dubai for a few months (and was thus losing touch with her Beiruti networks), asking her old friend and mentor Muriel was a safe option to yield able recommendations, similar to the brokerage process in the case of Tayyeb. A slight but telling difference between the two, however, is that while Hassan maintained his business' anonymity for as long as he could, thereby further 'vetting' the potential producer through meetings, mood boards and the like, Muna did not have such a luxury: the urgency of the job meant that she had little time to vet me and was in a position where she had to confirm me as soon as possible. Her request that I update her via WhatsApp on the goings on of the shoot were symptomatic of the former; the generous remuneration she offered of the latter.

There is a significant temporal factor between the two cases that influenced how the selection process was structured (informally for Road2Films, with safeguards for MBC). As previously mentioned, Road2Films were already ahead of schedule in delivering Mubadara episodes to AlJazeera. For MBC, the work required was time sensitive. The Five were to record their two singles on these two particular nights before flying back out to Dubai. The studios, composers, music producers, camera operators, and hotel rooms were all already booked. Moreover, on the other side of the screen, the plot line of the show was at the point where audiences were eagerly awaiting the debut of "The Five's" new singles. From Muna's perspective, then, cancelling or postponing the shoot was not an option. Hiring an incompetent producer, meanwhile, would have reflected badly on MBC and risked the discontent of other participants in the project including crewmembers, music producers and members of The Five. Indeed, the temporal sensitivity of the project was amplified by the multitude of production partners and participants. I continue to develop this particular argument in my analysis of the production phase up until the conclusion of this chapter, but it is worth stating it here: while the multiplicity of partnerships and ties revolving around the X Factor provided ample opportunities (such as use of StudioVision's space and relying on StudioVision's sister music production company executives), it also acted as a constraining factor (rescheduling the shoot was not an option due to increased costs and the difficulty in finding a date in which all participants were available). Furthermore, due to the multiplicity of partnerships in producing the X Factor, there was a lot hanging on the competence of the producer hired in a rush. Participating partners would have felt well within their rights to voice discontent at the incompetence of the new producer and imposed new conditions on Muna's end of the partnership.

Road2Films were able to "buy in groups" (Blair, 2001, p. 161), stipulating that Farah and I complete the whole project "from A to Z". For Muna from MBC, however, the 'groups' were already 'bought' through a variety of partnerships with StudioVision and Joseph the cameraman's Twin Productions. What was required was the 'buying' of an individual competent enough to produce the required footage and keep other partners happy (in other words, an individual capable of integrating seamlessly into the existing production network), particularly since StudioVision's participation as a partner in the X Factor implied less of an employer/employee relationship between them and MBC and more one of two partners doing their bit in the partnership. Indeed, the nuanced

differences between partnership with certain production participants and employment relationship with others complicated Muna's, and MBC's, position in this particular production instance, even allowing me to charge higher prices than I normally would.

Production: Collective, Formulaic Direction

Safeguarding selection and ensuring that those who are commissioned are 'up for the job' perhaps does not build sufficient trust between client and producer to last the entirety of the production process. This is perfectly justified: patronage networks, just like production networks, invest significant resources and emotions on products. In lay terms, there is often 'a lot hanging on this' for both those hiring and those producing; the manifestation of this investment textures the production process. There are certainly parallels here with Bourdieu's (1998a, pp. 64–67) more macro-level discussion of some of the ways in which television influences other fields of cultural production. In many ways the safeguarding of the selection phase, and as I discuss below the formulaic-ness of the production phase, are parallel micro-level crystallizations of his discussion on (local) market-driven cultural production. I begin my analysis of this phenomenon with the food photography projects first, before moving on to the TV productions.

The production network on the set of the Tayyeb photoshoot is represented in figure 19. The art direction department, headed by Remie, had two assistants whose sole purpose on set was to help Remie 'set up' the dishes, such as inserting toothpicks or pins to hold wraps together while maintaining sufficient space up front to show all the ingredients, 'burning' parts of the chicken or meat to suggest crispiness, and replacing stale-looking vegetables with fresher ones among other fictionally appetizing techniques. The two camera assistants reporting to me, meanwhile, were tasked with holding lighting fixtures and reflectors in a way that illuminates the most important parts of the dish being photographed. Upon the initial preparation of dishes, the head chef would report to Remie and myself and we would then make informed judgements about which dishes to shoot next based on the time it would take to 'style' each. Hassan's father, brother and Hassan himself were present on set as well, receiving reports from Remie and myself. In the admittedly simpler production diagram of the Fatso's shoot of figure 20, the restaurant manager and head chef Hussein would report to Farah and I when a dish was ready to be shot. Farah and I would

coordinate on the look of the dishes, choosing to spray cooking oil to make ingredients look shinier and fresher, while the assistant chef would report to the manager and head chef upon completing the preparation of individual ingredients for the head chef to put together and manager to help us during the chef's absence.

A visual reading of the network immediately flags a key difference of network size. The Fatso's network contains a total of five actors, while in Tayyeb there are 10 people reporting to each other: aside from requesting I take a photo of his lunch, Mikey did not concern himself much with the production process. In fact, he was on location for only about two hours during the shooting day, and that was to have lunch and show us off to some of his more established friends in the restaurant scene. This was in stark contrast to the Tayyeb photoshoot: Hassan would spend most of the day on location. His brother and father also made appearances. During the second day of the shoot they added a number of dishes to the schedule, causing delays to the production process. The agreed upon schedule stipulated a 12-hour shooting day from 7 am to 7 pm every day to prevent our exploitation of the production network in an industry severely lacking in unionisation or regulation (alluded to in the introductory chapter). But as night fell and Hassan came back to the set with his girlfriend and sister (passing by on their way to a night out), an argument broke out over the phone with his father and brother. Hassan moved to the balcony of the apartment we were shooting in, and defended the stylistic approach we had taken to the photoshoot. His father and brother were concerned that the style of the photos did not match the shaaby (popular / accessible) style of Barbar and would give a classier impression of the Tayyeb restaurant. Hassan, in turn, argued that there was a reason Tayyeb was not branded as Barbar. As I overheard the numerous conversations Hassan had during those four days of shoot, I understood that Tayyeb was Hassan's own project within the Barbar institution. Hassan wanted something more innovative than the tried-and-tested Barbar brand, while his brother and father pushed towards a safe, tried-and-tested aesthetic[49]. This configuration of interests served the family well: ensuring some innovation was championed by Hassan while his family kept him grounded in the Barbar way.

[49] This centred around lighting to prevent shadows, accentuating the product (sandwich) in the middle of the frame, and sprinkling around it as decoration the ingredients used to make the product.

Remie and I would debrief after closing the day. In these conversations we internalised the struggle of the client family. Remie was adamant that we had nothing to worry about. “We showed him in a very detailed and professional way the aesthetic we were going for. If he wasn’t happy with it he should have told us then so we change our approach. They can’t expect us to change everything now, it takes work!” For my part, I was rather more worried that a big and powerful family as Hassan’s could well refrain

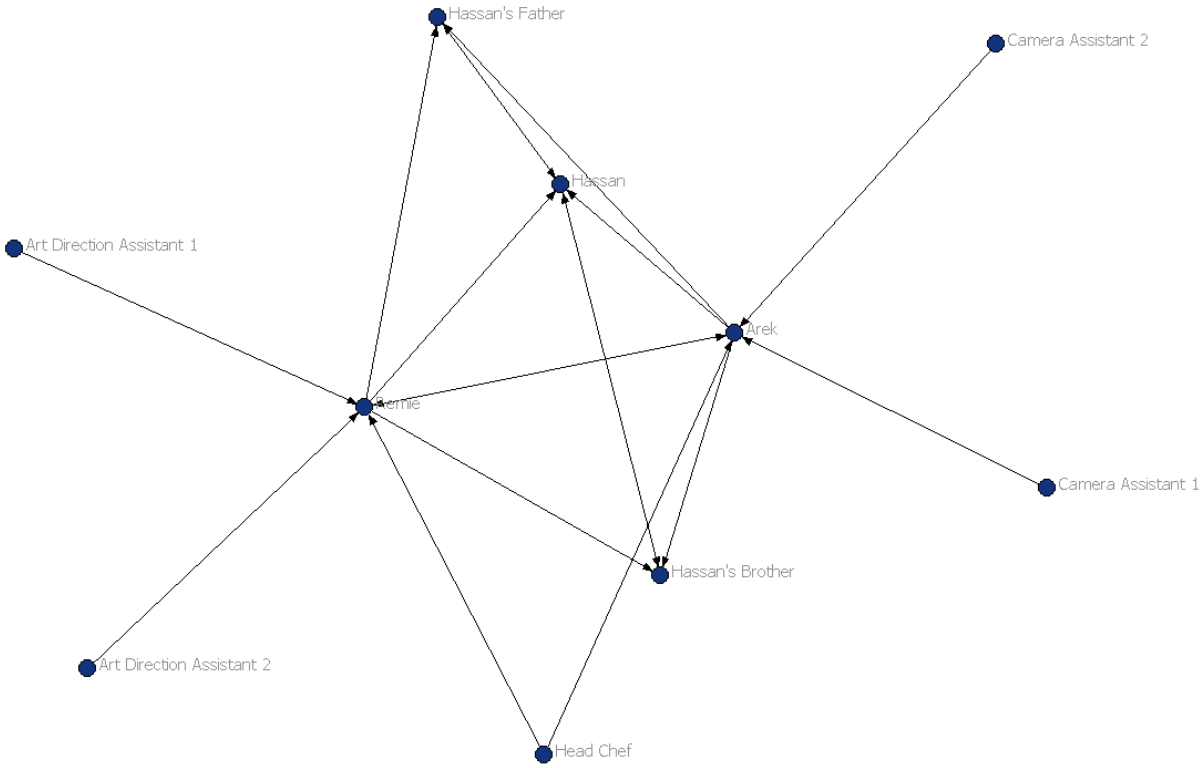

Figure 19: The Tayyeb production network

from paying us, and there would be very little we could do about it. Trying to comfort ourselves, Remie and I agreed that the aesthetic we were going for in the Tayyeb shoot was “modern shaaby”, fully consistent with Hassan’s own portrayal of the type of restaurant he wanted to open. The support Remie and I offered each other after-hours was crucial in maintaining focus during shooting days, and echoes Wei’s (2012) work on production workers engaging in identity work in order to mitigate the tension raised by the incompatibility of their own artistic principles with the requirements of the project employing them. But as we negotiated our own identities as producers there was a significant amount of emotional work too, particularly towards maintaining a degree of excitement at the type of images we were producing for Tayyeb while Hassan’s family exhibited a blunt willingness to deconstruct them.

There is room for productive reflection with Farrugia et al.'s (2017) use of the notion of affective labour here. Defined as "work in which the mobilisation, performance and enactment of subjectivities is critical to the labour performed, and in which the creation of sensations, emotions, or embodied experiences constitutes the true 'product' of the work" (ibid, p. 2), there is a two-way negotiation of affect in the Tayyeb experience. Our photos would not have been up to our own standards (agreed upon with Hassan) had we entered the set weighed down by Hassan's familial in-fighting. Key, then, was our subjective attachment to the photos we were commissioned to produce – our 'artistic' subjective attachment to the idea[50] of them – and that Hassan would later own (as opposed to merely owning the rights to them). The production budget reflected our production work, but certainly not our management of client infighting that rendered our own excitement more and more taxing to maintain. Taken further, it could be argued that the 'true' product of our work were not the photos we produced, rather these photographs' mobilisation of the Hassan's family's subjectivities. It mattered very little that we had agreed upon the particular aesthetic that we were delivering (that was requested by the client himself), what mattered was that what we were delivering failed to mobilise Hassan's father's and brother's subjectivities. It might help, then, to think of cultural work as the mutual mobilisation of subjectivities from producer to client.

Hassan's father and brother visited the set more frequently in the final two days, often giving advice on how to take the photos. Mikey's request that I shoot his lunch dish was harmless in comparison: he was not undermining the work carried out by the producers. Hassan's brother and father, by contrast, requested we provide a representative sample of the photos at the end of every shooting day and often required a reshoot of some of the photos. A common line photographers or film workers regularly receive and continuously despise is uninformed and misguided advice on how to shoot: "You have to get into the shot." Setting boundaries and protecting them, as such, becomes part of the requirements of the role of producer. Exhausted from the comments and muddling in our professional work, Remie and I felt less and less compelled to hide our frustration. I had got us this job and, feeling responsible for what Remie had to endure, I took it upon myself to repel the barrage of comments. On the afternoon of the third day, when Hassan's father made another

[50] Strandvad's (2011) work on how the idea of a cultural product participates in its own production is relevant here

"get into the shot" comment, I took a close-up of the dish as he had requested. He did not like it much. "That's why you should let professionals do their job without telling them how to do it. There's a reason you're paying me to do this and not doing it yourself," I sniped at the big intimidating man who also happened to collect Harley Davidsons. There was an added pressure here: both Hassan's father and Wissam from Road2Films were Harley Davidson enthusiasts. This increased the likelihood that they would one day meet and discuss their work-related issues, and I did not want my production network to be discussed in negative terms. Having taken encouragement from my standing up to the man, Remie and I adopted a much more professional, poker-faced demeanour during the fourth and final day of the shoot. Again relating to Wei (2012), my comments and Remie's poker face constituted another instance of identity work, where we both reasserted our identity as "professionals" and reclaimed a degree of control over at least the technical aspects of our work. "Yes, sir, but this was not something we were told when we were preparing for this shoot and we only have until 7 pm, so I'm afraid we cannot add these to the schedule. We'll do as much as we can, but we can only promise to deliver what we have agreed upon previously," was our party line in response to comments and additional dish requests.

It must be noted here, though, that the above discussion is not to paint Hassan or his family as 'bad bosses', rather to highlight negotiations between their own interests in the production process with our 'identity' as professionals and as people with inevitably some degree of emotional investment in the project at hand. In other words, it is to highlight the contingencies and negotiations that take place when a production network drapes around a particular patronage structure. Mikey's relative inexperience at commissioning photoshoots, meanwhile, coupled with his trust of Imad's recommendations, was conducive towards a less complicated production process than that of Tayyeb. We had agreed on how to shoot, and what to shoot prior to the production phase and Mikey left us to do our jobs. Reporting ties on the Fatso's set did not include Farah or myself having to show Mikey the photos we were in the process of taking for his validation or approval. The Tayyeb set was configured differently, and I had to report to Hassan, his brother and father constantly. This is not to make a normative judgement on the differing configurations of the production networks here. Soothing and assuaging clients is part and parcel of the job of being a cultural worker. In a previous experience, when I worked as an assistant art director in the production of a TV advert for an Egyptian juice brand, the producer treated the

client to a heavy, traditional Lebanese breakfast of raw meat and Arak, a traditional Lebanese alcoholic beverage similar to Pastis, every morning for three days. This ensured the client was easier to manage and lessened the expectation of reporting every step of the process to the client for validation. Returning to the above reflection on affective labour and the mobilisation of subjectivities, this was a clear instance where this mobilisation was 'lubricated' by alcohol[51].

While client management is part and parcel of the job of cultural producers, the influence of this expectation on the production process itself often goes unnoticed. While ads and higher-budget productions often have the human resources (an extra production assistant) and budget to allocate to client management, smaller 'package deal' productions rarely do. The professional role of producer / director remains the same throughout the production process (an expectation to produce), but behavioural expectations of these roles are textured by those commissioning production. Investigating equivalence classes in these production networks helps further our understanding of the nuancing of roles in different production instances: the Fatso's

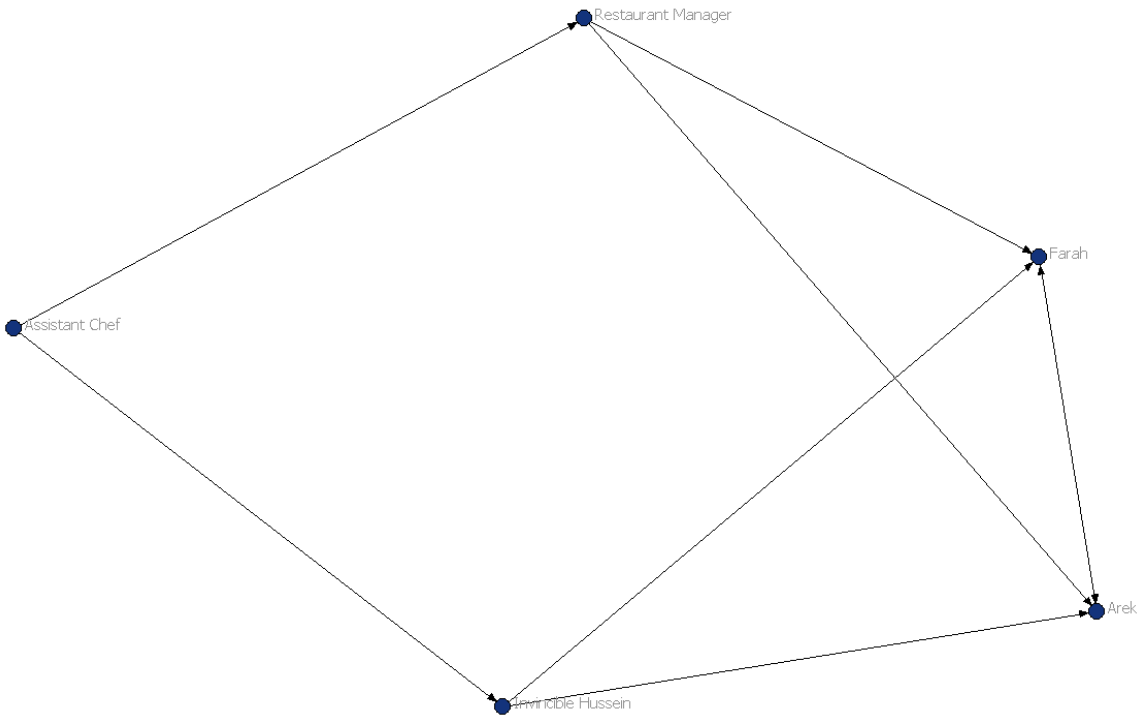

Figure 20: The Fatso's Production Network

[51] To a degree, I believe clients on film sets enjoy being tended to and often seek it out. There might well be more to commissioning an ad than just commissioning the ad: fringe benefits like being treated to a hefty breakfast by charming creatives and production assistants whose primary role is keeping one happy. The breakfast and the time spent by assistants tending to clients, of course, are paid for by the production budget.

production network above (figure 20) has three levels of regular equivalence: Farah and myself on the first level, a second level including head chef Hussein and a third with the restaurant manager and assistants. This implies a clear hierarchy of reporting in the Fatso's production network: Farah and I were the nodes that people reported to most (reporting a dish that is ready to be shot, for example), while the assistant chef reported to Invincible Hussein as they prepared dishes to be shot, who in turn reported to Farah and I. In other words, Farah and I directed the crew, and head chef Hussein directed his assistant. ("Report to" and "Direct" are taken as opposites here).

The case of Tayyeb paints a more complicated picture of reporting on set with the presence of two separate classes forming the highest order classes of regular equivalence: Remie and I; Hassan and Hassan's brother (figure 19). Clusters in the second equivalence class provide a more accurate picture of goings on in the Tayyeb production network: the first cluster is that of Remie, Head Chef and I, while the second is Hassan, his brother and father. The implications of this are that Remie and I were the two people most structurally equivalent in terms of receiving reports (a dish is ready to be shot / a dish is ready to be styled). These were mostly from the crew (particularly the head chef). The second cluster in terms of receiving reports, Hassan and his brother, received reports from Remie and myself.

By drawing upon an ethnographic understanding of the two networks, it is possible to ascertain that while in the Fatso's network reports received pertained only to the production process, reporting in the Tayyeb network was two-fold: Remie and I received reports on the photoshoot, and then reported the resulting photos to the clients themselves. This reporting structure on set can indeed be traced back to Hassan's family's 'control' of the production process, particularly in light of their own internal disagreements over the aesthetic properties of the photos produced. This adds a layer of client management to the role of the production network. Hassan's brother's and father's requirement of a more shaaby aesthetic influenced the way Remie and I carried out our roles as the producers, imposing a role expectation of reporting photos instantly on set. This inevitably competed with our primary role of producing photos as we both allocated more time and emotional resources on 'keeping the clients happy'. Our primary role of producing photos was also nuanced, requiring us to simultaneously negotiate our modern shaaby stylistic approach to the more formulaic, tried-and-tested Barbar style. This particular ordering of equivalence

classes of reporting ties on set, and Hassan's family's interest of 'controlling' the set, relate to their own investment of time and resources in their own project of opening a new restaurant. Fatso's had opened and begun serving food without any photographs of their dishes, but Mikey was to an extent free to do so particularly because Fatso's was still an 'unknown' to prospective clients. Tayyeb's membership of the Barbar family, by contrast, imposed certain requirements on the opening of the restaurant, such as adhering to Barbar-level quality of products and restaurant operations, but also to a Barbar-level presentation of products, menus, and photographs of dishes. Indeed, after the completion of the photoshoot, The Farm requested I provide the photos in raw and tiff format: raw to be able to edit photos at a later date without loss of image quality, tiff to be able to export an extremely large image size that was to go on an advertisement panel on the Beirut - South Lebanon highway. The high-quality jpeg files I provided alongside the raw and tiff backups, meanwhile, were to be used on the Tayyeb menu and broadcast as a slideshow on the many television screens in the restaurant itself.

Again, there is a parallel here with the final point made above on ring-fencing the selection process. Just as the multitude of partnerships provided opportunities but also constraints on MBC's management of the selection process, there is a parallel to

be drawn with the case of Tayyeb. The 'weight' of Barbar being a food-serving

Figure 21: Modern Shaaby

institution with certain standards and approaches to uphold (undoubtedly an opportunity for increased profit and income) constrained not only the production process (in terms of reconciling shaaby with modern shaaby) but Hassan's family's management of the production process in terms of retaining a degree of control over it and needing to hire a relatively professional production network that would be competent at providing images of a certain aesthetic quality and technical standard needed to be placed on massive billboards, restaurant menus and television screens.

Production: Outsourced, Multi-Platform and Plural

While the food photography cases above shed light on how the role of the producer undergoes subtle transformations from project to project as a function of the relationship of patronage established with the interests and baggage of those who commission production, here I focus more on the situated experience of producers in instances when the patronage relationship is not as straightforward. To be sure, this is the section in which I expand upon the oft-repeated but not yet dissected argument that larger and more complex production networks provide opportunities but also constraints on the production process. As I engage with the two television production cases of AlJazeera and MBC, I aim to show that in what Caves (2000) would describe as complex cultural goods (ie those that are part of larger production processes) what influences the role of the producer is not just the patron as a single individual actor, but the agglomeration of partnerships that necessitate production for which crewmembers are hired. In other words, and drawing more closely upon Caves (2000), whereas in the production of simple cultural goods the particularity of the production process is informed by the relationship between patronage network and production network (such as Mikey, Farah and myself, or Hassan's family, Remie and myself), the replacement of the patron as a single entity with an agglomeration of partnerships in the production of complex cultural goods necessarily complicates the social space in which producers are hired to do their jobs, thus further complicating the role expectations of being a producer. To this end I provide below representations of the production networks of two television emissions: Al-Jazeera's Mubadara (figure 22) and MBC's The X Factor (figure 23).

In the Mubadara diagram of figure 22, the third crewmember (production assistant Mohammad) reported to the co-directors Farah and Arek on temporal factors that would impact the shoot such as the receptionist receiving a lengthy phone call (which meant we would not be able to shoot), or would silently signal to us logistical issues that we would have to factor in such as the sun coming out of the clouds and significantly increasing the intensity of light in the room while we shoot the interview scene. Members of the Haemophilia centre would also report to the co-directors on what was expected of them in terms of acting. Figure 23, representing the X-Factor production network, was larger due to the multiplicity of products being readied simultaneously. The filmmaking crew (camera assistant, sound recordist and camera operator) would report solely to Joseph Twin productions (the primary camera operator) and myself (the director / producer) on filming matters such as how and where from to film the band as the five of them huddle up on one microphone in the recording studio. Band members not only reported to Joseph Twin Production and myself (to be given acting and 'blocking' directions), but also to the music producers, their manager, Georges from Platinum Records, and the lyricist to receive instructions on how to sing and what the next item in their schedule was (cf Born, 2015b).

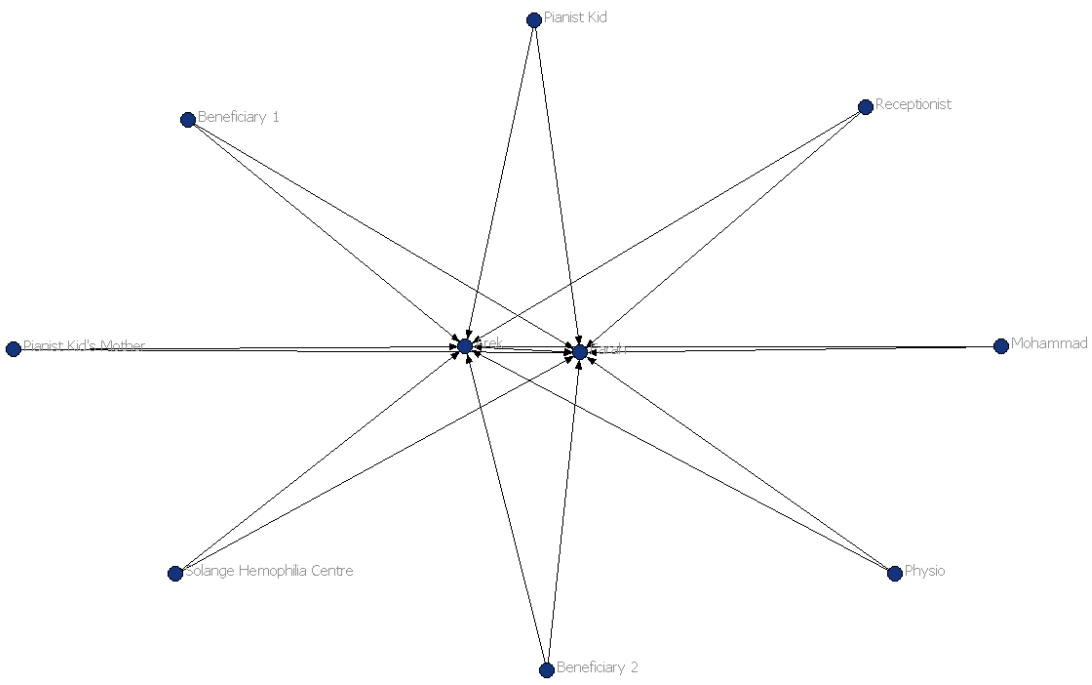

Figure 22: The AlJazeera production network

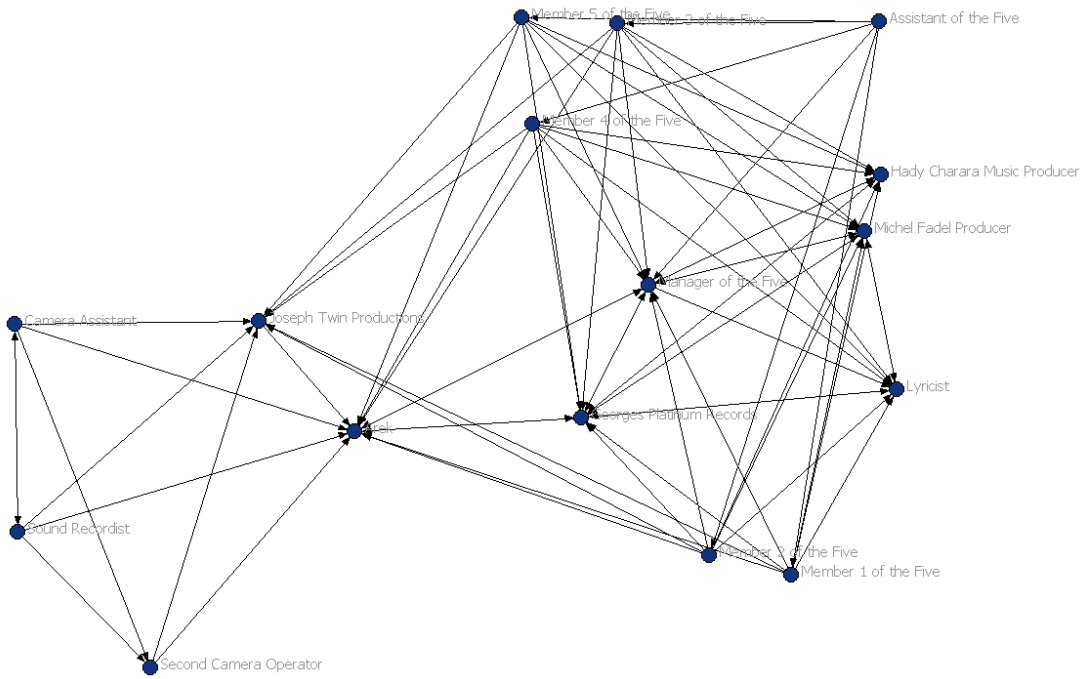

Figure 23: The X-Factor production network

Aside from the significantly larger size of the MBC production network, the star shape of the Mubadara network indicates a clearer structure of production network in the case of the latter. A visual reading of the network shows clearly that cast members reported to the two producers (Farah and myself), as did the production assistant Mohammad. A reading of the MBC network, meanwhile, signals a more complicated role-based structre only to be clarified further by extracting classes of regular equivalence and an ethnographic understanding of the network.

Equivalence classes in the Mubadara network are consistent with its visual reading: everyone reported to Farah and Arek, ie the producers. (As nodes, Farah and I are structurally equivalent here, in that we have the same number of incoming and outgoing ties to the same people, and are therefore completely substitutable (Hanneman and Riddle 2005)). While the experience of filming Mubadara was hardly ideal (we had to set a reshoot date without pay), the fact that the two producers are in an equivalence class of their own represents a professionally efficient network configuration[52]. Similar to the Fatso's production network, the producers were the ones being reported to by everyone else in the network, and it can be therefore said that they retained a significant degree of on-set control. The absence of reporting to

[52] Becker (1984) would call this a conventional network configuration

other groups signifies a degree of autonomy over the production process too. While Farah and I had relatively unfettered control over the production of Fatso's photos and the Mubadara episode, we were still required to follow particular formulas and conventions of production. In the case of Fatso's, as in the case of Tayyeb, these were conventions of food photography (attention should be drawn directly to the food / the food should look tasty and enticing and so on). For Mubadara, the conventions were repeatedly recounted to us by Amal's repetitive insistence that "the action is the most important thing." The relative autonomy we had in Fatso's was that we created stop-motion animations, while for the Mubadara episode it was engendered in Cynthia's encouragement that we shoot with our "raw, street style".

In the MBC network, the presence of three distinct first and second level clusters of regular equivalence complicates the picture. Sound recordist, camera assistant and second camera are equivalent in that they all reported to Joseph Twin Productions, i.e. the main camera operator, and myself, the producer. This cluster itself is relatively insignificant for the purposes of this chapter, however, while the two other clusters within the same equivalence class provide significant insight. Georges from Platinum Records, the manager of the Five, and myself form one cluster, while lyricist and Michel Fadel form another. The cluster Georges, Manager and Arek signifies that the three of us were being reported to similarly, but by different people. Michel Fadel and Lyricist had the same number of people reporting to them as well. But the evidently symmetric relationship of reporting among Georges, the manager and myself indicates a significant relationship of coordination amongst the three of us. This is indeed corroborated by centrality measures that place the three of us as the most central actors in the network. In other words, the centrality measures indicate that more often than not, other nodes had to pass through us in reporting to others. The simultaneous production of a variety of cultural products (album singles and footage) was therefore a process managed or coordinated by those responsible for producing each (Georges Platinum Records for the album singles, myself for the footage) and the person responsible for the actors in each product (the manager of The Five). In terms of role expectations, then, the role of producing footage for MBC's X-Factor was textured with the expectation of facilitating - or coordinating - the simultaneous production of another cultural good: album singles. The significance of this is that unlike in the other cases in this chapter, I was not just to be held accountable to Muna who hired me (and

all that Muna represents), but also to Muna's own production partners simultaneously producing an album as I produced footage.

An engagement with the patronage ties behind each production instance makes for interesting reading here. The Mubadara episode was outsourced twice (first by AlJazeera, second by Road2Films), while the MBC production was managed in-house (by Muna and Sushmita) in partnership with StudioVision and Platinum Records (in turn a StudioVision partner). I use the word partnership when referring to the relationship between MBC, StudioVision and Platinum Records because it is not a relationship of patronage, where one entity sells labour power to another entity for a particular project. Indeed, all three entities participated in producing the complex ecosystem of cultural products that made up the X-Factor by exchanging services and sharing profits. This showcases in turn how the patronage network itself can be "interstitial", to refer to Kadushin's (1976, p. 770) description, comprised of a regional television channel, a regional studio agency and its musical arm. Such cases provide traction for Jones' (1996, p. 59) argument that the project be taken to be the primary organiser of labour as opposed to the firm. Still, though, this requires further research into the durability and length of partnership among StudioVision, MBC and Platinum Records, which falls outside the remit of this chapter. The simpler Mubadara case provides a comparative lever that sheds light on how much individual instances of production differ from one another or, as Faulkner and Anderson (1987, p. 887) put it, the "erratic" nature of production work, and thus the variety of production contexts producers and production networks must adapt to on a project basis. Mubadara was a standalone cultural product in the form of a seven-minute episode, meaning that the production phase of that project was focused solely on producing the episode. By contrast, the MBC production was an agglomeration of two different production processes: that of producing two singles in an album, and that of producing content for the X Factor, the Five, and Shahed.net. The latter is related to what Powers (2014) calls building buzz, and the implications of such a complex configuration of production are significant for the cultural producer. As patronage networks and relationships (from Mikey the individual, to Hassan's family, to the outsourcing Road2Films, to the complex partnerships of the X-Factor) around projects become more complex, so too do the role-based expectations on those producing these projects: managing clients' expectations, setting and maintaining boundaries, coordinating simultaneous, parallel

production processes become increasingly integral job requirements alongside shooting people and objects on camera.

Continuity

Remie and I had never worked with each other before the Tayyeb project, despite being friends and sharing similar tastes in photography and film. Indeed, we were both nervous about running a set together for the first time, to the point where we extended an open invitation for our filmmaker friends to pass by and lend helping hands if they were so willing. Upon submitting the photographs and 'closing' Tayyeb, we both decided to formalize our arrangement. Feedback from the Tayyeb project was extremely positive: Hassan wanted us to shoot the Ramadan menu for Barbar, and our filmmaker friends volunteered to recommend us should they ever hear of a potential food photography project. "We work really well together and we make beautiful photos," was the common evaluation that preceded an agreement to "package" us at an average of $900 per day at a $500 / 400 split between photographer and art director respectively for future food photography project. "The most we can go down to is $750 per day," we agreed, "we can take this to ad agencies" (cf Gerber and Childress, 2017, on service-provision). This agreement bore with it certain unspoken principles and guidelines that we tacitly established while producing Tayyeb: shooting days would not last longer than 12 hours, additional dishes not considered during pre-production would only be added as an extra shooting day, and our future clients would be made to sign legally binding contracts. Hassan and his cousin both contacted us separately for the Ramadan menus of their own restaurants (Hassan's cousin Ali ran Agha: the iteration of Barbar in the southern suburbs of Beirut). We refused both projects, even though financially they would have made a lot of sense for us: I was due back in expensive Edinburgh after my fieldwork, while Remie was not yet ready "to call the ad agencies and tell them I'm back on the scene." We refused Hassan because he wanted to pay us less than the Tayyeb budget. Ali, for his part, asked us to "shoot a couple of dishes" during what was to be our first pre-production meeting with him – a greater insult to producers than asking them to 'get into the shot' if there ever was one.

Muna also called back, offering another two-day job in Beirut that coincided with my flight back to Edinburgh. I referred her to Remie. Farah and I, meanwhile, agreed to abandon hopes for Bonnie & Clyde and settle for a more realistic arrangement where she would take over individually as my attention turned to the PhD. Together with Mohammad (the production assistant in the AlJazeera project), they negotiated further collaboration with Road2Films upon my departure. Throughout the four projects discussed in this chapter, and in between them, relationships among members of the production networks evolved both in their personal and professional aspects. In deciding to no longer work for Hassan shared artistic identities guiding future collaborations were negotiated under the tacit acknowledgement that the money on offer from Hassan would feed into the "illusion of autonomy" (Menger 1999, p. 52). With only $50 in the shared pot and Batoota Films (the production company behind Shankaboot which provided us with free equipment) selling all their equipment, the decision to end Bonnie & Clyde was based on a sobering assessment of the paucity of resources available to us and the acknowledgement that Farah and I would remain close friends.

Conclusion

So the formation and maintenance of networks of cultural production is the result of a continuous and complex relational assessment of a variety of factors that juxtapose the boundaries of artistic identities with the potential durability of repeat collaborations with patrons[53]. This is a plural process, to be sure, it takes place at different sites of the network: 'internally' among 1) producers and 2) clients (or the patronage structure) and '3) interstitially' in the patronage tie through which production networks 'drape around' these more formal patronage structures. Joseph, the camera operator in the X-Factor case, had certainly established Twin Productions with such considerations:

[53] While the results of these considerations shaped the 'packages' we designed, at no point did we (or anyone else) budget in 'premiums' for clients known to require particular on-set attention: we planned to charge future controlling Hassans and laissez-faire Mikeys the same price. In fact, the closest to a 'premium' I've ever come across is that producers tend to give 'easy' clients a discount more easily, while they are keen to charge difficult clients the full rate (cf Ursell (2000) on complicity).

"I started working on these TV shows a few years ago. I filmed Star Academy, Celebrity Duets, a lot of projects. But then at some point I started getting too many offers and I couldn't be in two places at the same time so I started Twin Productions. Now, these companies know that they can call me and I'll be available – if not me then someone I've trained. It's nice. You know how many times I've met Haifa? She knows me by my first name now."

The situated experience of the production networks in the above projects animates the core / periphery model that Faulkner and Anderson (1987), Cattani and Ferriani (2008) have foregrounded in their analyses of Hollywood films, reconciling it with the third phase Jones (1996, pp. 63 - 67) identifies when discussing boundaryless careers: that of maintaining the career and balancing it with personal needs. While Joseph and Twin Production employees benefit from repeat collaborations with television companies and do indeed form the core group of camera workers that these companies rely upon, they hardly see themselves as forming the 'core' group of camera operators in television. Similarly, while the production network Remie and I were forming could have acted as the 'core' for Hassan and his family business, we would still be some way off the 'core' of food photographers such as Toufic Araman or Tony Ellieh on the market. The contribution of foregrounding cultural production as "work" is therefore an understanding that, in isolation, the core / periphery model is susceptible to issues of scale (Hassan's family business vs the market for food photography, for example). Joseph had no intention of being the highest paid or 'best' camera operator out there, he was satisfied with the relative stability of having a variety of television clients and the joys of meeting celebrities through his work.

Intuitively, it makes sense to think that production networks 'work their way up', and that that requires a considerable amount of managing expectations. But I would like my chapter to contribute in terms of shedding light on the perceived boundarylessness of such mobility. Networks of film production do not operate in a social vacuum, managing the particularities of each project as they come. Quite the contrary: the social space in which networks of cultural production 'float' has indeed multiple boundaries associated with those who commission production, and those who do the production. Being commissioned by a startup is not at all the same as being commissioned by a regional broadcasting behemoth: each has its own particular boundaries, opportunities and constraints, which I have tried to shed light on.

Networks of film production navigate these on a project basis, 'draping' themselves around a variety of formal and less formal institutional, individual and familial structures and networks, flexibly reconfiguring themselves and negotiating boundaries in relation to those who commission them. Remie and I formalised our arrangement as a result of an 'internal' evaluation, while Joseph set up Twin Productions as a result of the strength of the 'interstitial' patronage tie with his television clients. Joseph's experience also nuances our understanding of mobility towards the core in filmmaking careers: we are not hard-wired to keep moving in one direction. At some point in their careers, people (and by extension production networks, e.g. Twin Productions) take stock of and become satisfied with the degree of stability provided by their position on the core/periphery continuum.

I hope to have communicated through this chapter that the formation and maintenance of networks of cultural production are processes dependent on a variety of personal and professional considerations and contingencies, such as the potential durability of patronage and personal ties, the mediation of artistic identities with unavoidably erratic client expectations, the availability of resources, and the malleability of production network ties in cyclical attachment and detachment to more formal patronage structures. In the following chapter, I further develop this central argument to my thesis by considering the role that cultural products play in the formation and maintenance of production networks.

Producing Objects, Co-Constructing (Networked) Selves

While the focus of the previous chapter was the influence of project-anchored relationships, whether internally among producers or the 'interstitial' relationships of patronage with clients, moving beyond the singular cycle of selection to distribution introduces an altogether different 'thing' that shapes the formation and maintenance of networks of cultural production: the cultural product itself. Indeed, Remie and I would not have been offered to shoot Tayeb's Ramadan menu had the photographs, the cultural products, from our previous engagement with patrons, not been positively received by Hassan and his family. Their liking of these photographs was necessarily a subjective response, but it lead to an objective outcome in the form of new potential project. This mediated translation from subjective experience to objective process has been the site of cultural sociological debate for some time now: are cultural products agents in and of themselves, mediators, or merely passive objects of consumption? My current chapter does not purport to solve this long-standing debate around the ontology of cultural objects, but their influence on the lives and situated experience of the networks that produce them merits further investigation and, perhaps, a contribution to this sociological standoff. So in this chapter I ask: "what is the role of cultural objects in the formation and maintenance of networks of film production in Beirut?" / "How can we theorise the relationship between production networks and the products they produce?"

In what follows I first hone in on these debates and put them in dialogue with the experiences of the networks of cultural production this thesis is concerned with. I do this by reconstructing these networks at the watershed moment when Shankaboot, BILY and Fasateen were produced and deliberate over the influence these cultural products, these objects, had in shaping the very same networks at the time of my fieldwork two years later. Specifically, I discuss how they participated, actively or passively, in changing the structural positions of three network members: Bass the

scriptwriter, Farah the production-assistant-turned-assistant director, and Gilles the assistant director who shifted towards writing and directing.

During the early stages of my time in the field, when Farah and I spent our days in the Road2Films editing suite debating what "it" (the AlJazeera episode) needs and our nights editing Fatso's photos, I would often end the day with a visit to a friend with whom I shared an affinity for whisky. Fuad had first contacted me during our undergraduate years to make the music for his student theatre productions. He now shared an office with his sister's design firm as a base for his freelance scriptwriting work, and we would alternate our whisky drinking sessions between there and my flat (his sister was pious, so we had to make sure to wash our glasses and keep them in Fuad's room). Around the time I left for Edinburgh Fuad had got a job at his old school as a drama teacher, a position he was excelling in, enjoying the perks of (directing interactive plays with his students and purchasing the most recent equipment through the school budget to film these performances) and still having time to concentrate on his freelance writing and directing work after school. He asked for my help with one of his projects: a university student-led organisation, Lezem ('should' in Arabic), had commissioned him to write a promotional film and were impressed by his idea of a mockumentary. "I'm good at writing satire, you're good at making documentaries, come and help this satirical mockumentary look like an actual documentary," he told me on one of our whisky sessions before they developed into spaces of joint reflection on filmmaking networks and careers in Beirut.

While Farah and I had Bonnie and Clyde, Fuad had started a production house with his two close friends Rayssa and Karim. He would write and direct, Rayssa would shoot, and Karim would produce under the name of Tricycle Films. In 2012, Tricycle shot its first short, Der Fotograf, adapted and directed by Fuad. The film focused on Hitler's thoughts and reflections in the final moments before delivering an important speech; it was meant to further Tricycle Films' reputation as an artistic production house, complementing their already impressive portfolio of promotional films for medium sized companies in Saudi Arabia and Egypt (cf Platman, 2004; Strandvad, 2015). A year after Der Fotograf was shot Karim and Rayssa both moved to Paris to pursue higher education in film production. "This film was really bad to me," Fuad confided:

"I think I made the wrong choice with the topic. It really screwed me. I applied to so many festivals and nobody would take it. I couldn't just shoot another one with a more appealing subject. In the end I started to make fun of the situation by putting all the official rejections as opposed to selections on there. There's even an official rejection from the Edinburgh International Film Festival! I remembered you when I put that."

Der Fotograf had fallen short of achieving the reasonable expectations Fuad had set, despite his best efforts at mitigating the thematic taboo associated with it. His career had been recovering from this by the time we were sharing whiskies (evidenced by his job at school, his freelance engagements and his apprenticeship with the lead writer of Shankaboot Bass Breche), but the vignette highlights a salient fork in current cultural sociological debate. That Der Fotograf was "bad to" Fuad contrasts with allusions to the role of cultural products as discussed in the previous chapter, where successful past projects led to more commercialised, institutionalised and complex new projects, facilitating the career progression of producers. Fuad's case, meanwhile, sheds a more telling light on how cultural products can also hinder the careers of their producers. More deeply, cases such as Fuad's have been the site of divergence over different approaches to studying art, between traditional sociological approaches (such as Becker (2005, 1974) and Bourdieu(1993)), 'post-Bourdieusian' approaches championed by Born (2010) and object-oriented ontologists such as Hennion (2003, 2002) and Strandvad (2012, 2010).

Zolberg (1990, p. 54) argues that sociologists' concern with the social ("for sociologists, more important than art creation is the social process of status creation" (ibid 55 - 56)) unfairly renders art objects byproducts, and warns that such neglect for objects might lead the discipline to "suffer from a dangerous reductionism" (ibid, p. 213). Indeed, this potentially detrimental shortcoming already becomes apparent when placing the above vignette in dialogue with sociology's overriding interests: cultural objects, it seems, participate in these processes of status creation (or subversion, in Fuad's case). In a bid to address such gaps in sociological analysis, Zolberg (1990, p. 213) calls for a more reflexive approach that is mindful of "middle levels of societal structures" that map out linkages between subjective experiences (the aesthetic) and objective structures and processes (the social). Born (2010, p. 174), meanwhile, is skeptical about how "the value-free sociology that she [Zolberg] advocates can engage with the questions of form and aesthetics" despite agreeing with Zolberg's (1990, p.

212) warnings against reductionism. In articulating some of the foundational principles of object-oriented ontologies, Born (2010) argues that research on cultural production, reflexive or otherwise, that does not engage with the specificities of the cultural product in question, inevitably - and reductively - ignores the agency of its producers:

> *"If there is an overriding dimension of creative practice that has been lamentably neglected – by Bourdieu, production of culture and cultural studies alike – and that demands to be studied, it is the insistent, existential reality of the historical orientation of producers by reference to the aesthetic and ethical trajectories or coordinates of the genres in which they work, an orientation that enables or affords agency"* (Born 2010, p. 192)[54]

In parallel to the above cultural sociological debates, network scholars have also recognised the need to theorise cultural objects within a networked framework (Breiger, 2010; Breiger and Puetz, 2015; Fuhse, 2015, 2009, p. 64; Mische, 2008; Mutzel, 2009; Pachucki and Breiger, 2010; Puetz, 2015; Schultz and Breiger, 2010). This has come against the backdrop of a "cultural turn" (Breiger 2010, p. 37) in network analysis whereby, having initially actively distanced social network analysis from culture in the 1970s , network scholars recognised that social networks are inherently cultural. This cultural turn, coupled with the versatility of social network analysis in analysing both human and non-human actors, has led to the further recognition that objects are indeed under-theorised within networks. Schultz and Breiger (2010, p. 624) argue that "one's relationships with cultural objects and one's relations with other persons have much in common". Within the broader framework of relational sociology, Mutzel (2009, p. 879) states that objects do indeed play a role in social life in her discussion of the similarities and differences between social network analysis and actor-network theory. Her articulation of the differences between the two approaches, meanwhile, provides useful ontological insight into the efficacy of network analysis as a framework through which to further explore the above cultural sociological debates: "For relational sociology, eventually only humans are able to tell stories. Humans can ascribe stories to objects, and thus incorporate them in a social network and account for interacting with them, but social action emanates from humans only (Godart and White, 2010)" (Mutzel 2009, p. 879). This restraining (as opposed to a priori imposition as active or passive) of the ontology of objects, aesthetic or other, is productive in the context of this chapter, confirming the

[54] Relatedly, she talks of genres-in-process, for instance

ontological compatibility of the social network approach with the aforementioned traditional sociological approaches .

So, to what extent can we attribute that particular moment in Fuad's career to the dissolution of his most immediate production network, to the (negative) role played by Der Fotograf in his life, or a combination of the two? Informed but not determined by the above points of divergence among different approaches to objects within a networked framework, the framing research questions of this chapter are aimed at contributing to the academic cannon by shedding a textured exploratory light on "what they can do" (Pinney, 2004, p. 8 in Rose, 2016, p. 21). In the pages below I engage in a brief discussion contextualising my ensuing analysis, before investigating the role of objects in the lives of a number of individuals and workgroups within the network.

Scene-Setting and Making Sense of Credit Data

In 2011, a BBC World Service Trust funded web-series called Shankaboot won the first Emmy Award ever granted to an Arabic-language production. Already in its fifth season upon receiving the award, since launching in 2009, Shankaboot had accumulated a massive online following in Lebanon and the Arab World for its episodes - released on YouTube on Tuesdays and Fridays - and online presence through Twitter and Facebook, consolidated by guerrilla marketing stencils and campaigns all over Beirut. The series, following the life of a 15-year-old homeless delivery boy and his adventures around Lebanon, was a watershed moment for the Lebanese film industry, leading to the production of a number of other web-series with varying degrees of success. Beirut I Love You (BILY), funded by a TV station called the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation (LBC), was the story of a group of friends from different sectarian backgrounds. It rose to prominence as Shankaboot's fifth and final season was in post-production. After both Shankaboot and BILY had concluded, Yahoo! approached Shankaboot's producer, Katia Saleh, for a new web-series that would be used to promote their new online video platform. Katia brought together different members of the Shankaboot and BILY crews for the production of Fasateen, which centred around the intersection of the lives of three women and was meant to have an empowering message. Valet Parking was the last of this first wave of

web-series enabled by Shankaboot. The 2013 production whose plot centred around the adventures of a young man who worked in valet parking was funded by Future television but was discontinued after a 14-episode season.

While Valet Parking did draw upon some of the crewmembers who produced the other three web-series outlined above, it was considered a bit of an outlier to the web-series trend because of the length of its episodes (30 minutes compared compared to no more than seven), an aesthetic that was deemed too close to Shankaboot and an already contentious relationship between Shankaboot producer Katia and Valet Parking head Merass. By 2013 the web-series trend in Lebanon had subsided and would not return for another year, but this production of three web-series in quick succession by a more or less similar crew, and the complex – sometimes tense – relationships that bound their producers together, are indicative of the formation of a distinct network of film producers, junior and senior, whose personal and professional relationships with each other last until today (albeit having gone through a variety of changes and transformations) and which form the empirical foundation of the next and final chapter. I represent the network that produced Shankaboot, BILY and Fasateen (the timeframe T1) in figure 24 below. Figure 25, meanwhile, represents the network at the time of my fieldwork during the first half of 2015 (the timeframe T2). It should be noted that both of these diagrams are for illustrative purposes only, providing the networked backdrop on which I base my empirical analysis.

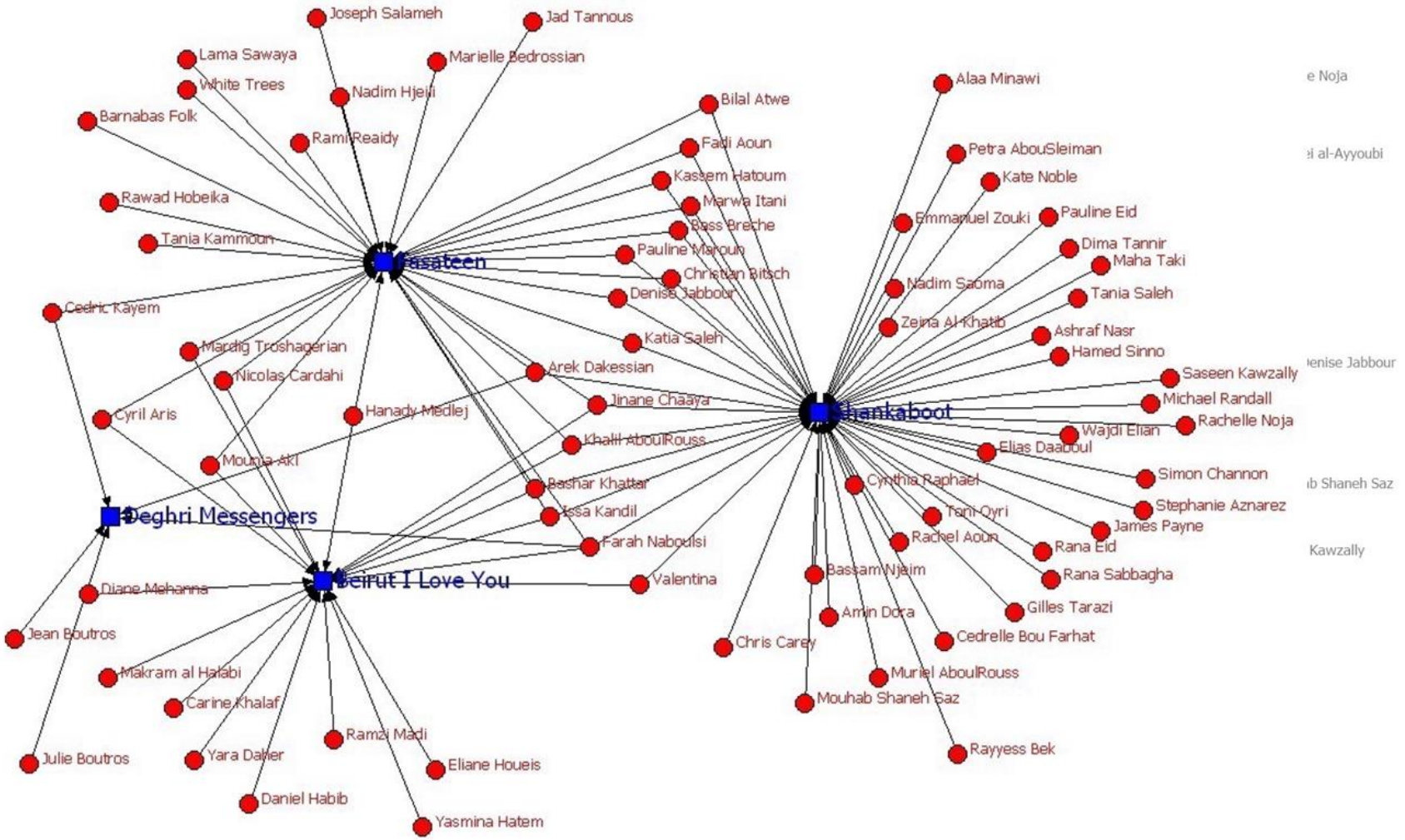

Figure 24: The Shankaboot, BILY and Fasateen Network (T1)

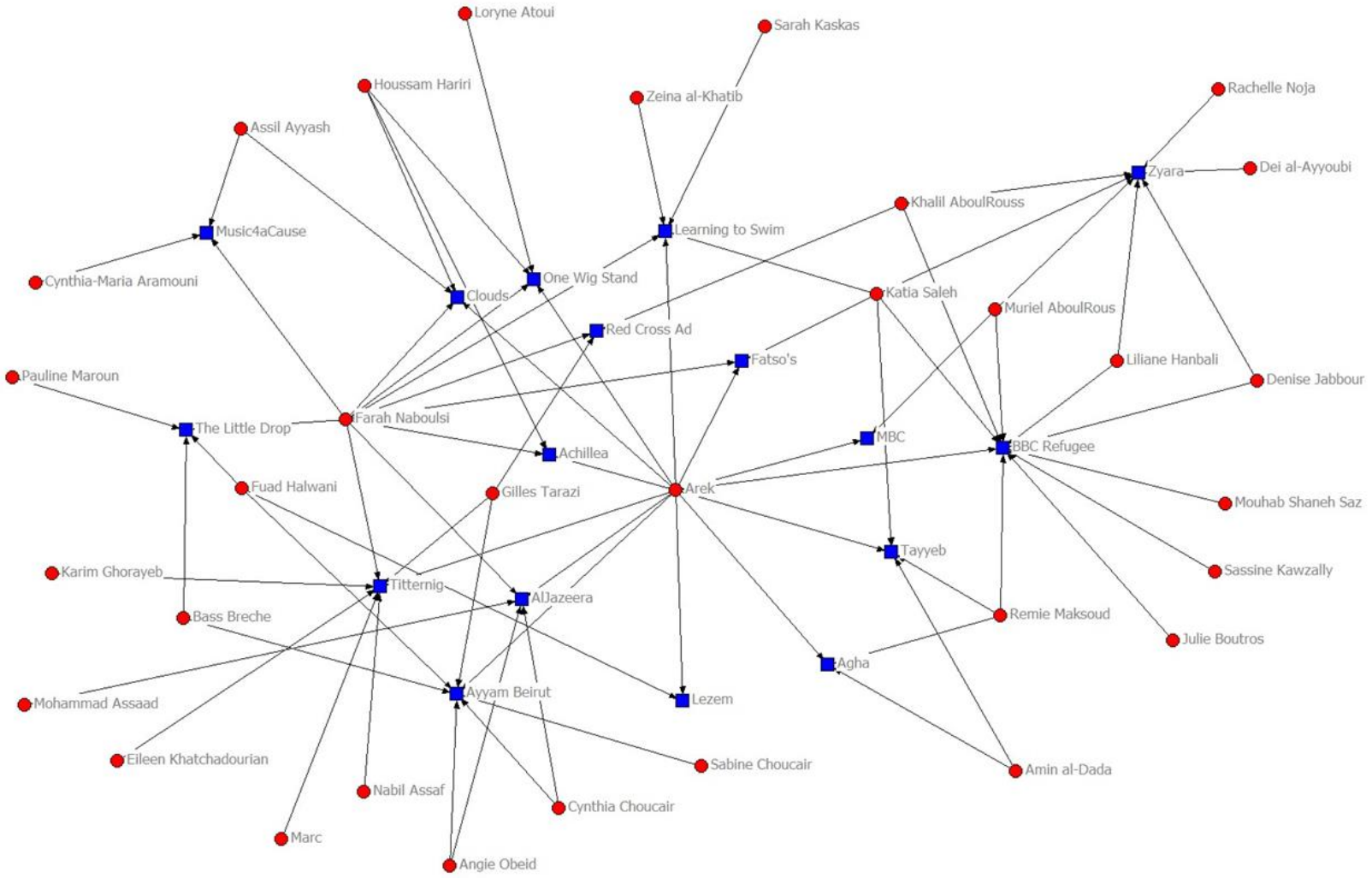

Figure 25: Production Network During Fieldwork (T2)

Networks T1 and T2

In the network T1, data for Shankaboot (n= 48) was obtained through the Shankaboot website. While credit data for seasons three and four were unavailable , I somewhat circumvented this shortcoming by looking at the 'making of' photo albums for seasons three and four on Facebook. I identified those who have worked for more than two seasons in Shankaboot but whose participation was unrepresented due to missing data. Therefore, barring missing data, anyone who had worked on Shankaboot for at least more than two seasons has been represented in the above network. Credit data for BILY (n= 19) was mined from a previous paper in which I engaged with the series. For that paper, data was obtained through the BILY website and the credit rolls at the end of episodes. The website has since been taken offline, however, due to disagreements over ownership of the intellectual property between co-directors Cyril and Mounia on one side and producer Yara (representing LBC) on the other. To overcome this shortcoming, I cross-referenced my existing BILY credit data during an interview with Cyril. Here, I asked about specific names and the roles they played first, before asking again from the perspective of the roles played: "What did Jinane do? Was she in both seasons? / Were there any PAs on set? Who was the boom operator in season one?" As with BILY data, I also referred to a previous SNA engagement with Fasateen (n= 30) and cross-referenced these with credit rolls at the end of Fasateen episodes online. Data for the T2 network, meanwhile, has been collected ethnographically and cross-referenced by credit data where available. It is also worth noting that in figure 25, not all those who participated on the Titternig music video, the Red Cross ad, the Little Drop, music4acause, and the MBC production (most notably discussed in the previous chapter) have been included in the network.

Two remaining issues merit brief further discussion however, pertaining to the boundaries of the network and the inherent political nature of credit data. I begin with the latter: this is not to be blamed on the inherent limitations of credit data, rather the researcher. Here, I have loosely adopted a nominalist approach in setting the boundaries of a 'real' network, identifying actors who are analytically significant based on the pre-existing relationships (since figure 24) that tie them together (see Scott, 2012, p. 43). While this subtle 'skewing' of boundary-setting could be – at first thought – seen to contradict the realist ontology outlined in the methodology chapter,

it is important to note that it does not redefine network ontology, rather it "makes reflexive" the problem of boundary setting. Emirbayer (1997, p. 303 – 304), drawing upon Breiger (1981), elaborates on this, stating that in such cases substantialist (realist) boundaries are "played off against boundaries defined by relations" (Emirbayer 1997, p. 303). I also stress that the purpose of the above networks is not to mirror the production process of each project, rather to illustrate the position of my research population between T1 and T2. Scott (2012, p. 44) states:

"The determination of network boundaries is not simply a matter of identifying the apparently natural or obvious boundaries (…) [it] is the outcome of a theoretically informed decision about what is significant in the situation under investigation."

This provides informative insight that can also be applied to Becker's (1984, p. 9) discussion of the shortcomings of credits: what is required here is not a complete representation of every actor's participation in the above projects, rather an illustration along the lines of 'where are they now' as a contextual backdrop that is conducive to an analysis of what these projects did to their makers. I have therefore retained only the makers (and their immediate networks) on whom I have sufficient data to discuss what was done unto them by the products they made.

Credits, Limitations and Network-Level Observations

Becker (1984, p. 9) rightly alludes to the fact that credits do not represent the full "finesse of the division of labor involved," discussing the omission of certain names who nonetheless contribute to the production process. Admittedly, this is a limitation inherent in credits, reflecting their political nature. Those whose work is deemed worthy enough by key producers (usually heads of production departments) are included in the credits, reflecting their own opinions on what constitutes a 'professional' role in the network. Becker (1984, p. 18) calls this an ideological move, arguing it "posits a perfect correlation between doing the core activity and being an artist." In some products credits are conventionally ignored altogether. Food photography provides a useful example here: restaurant menus rarely, if ever, credit the photographer, camera assistant, food stylist, and the numerous production assistants involved in the production of those appetite-inducing photographs. Moreover, it is important to recognise that credit data are not sensitive to the temporalities of cultural production. Crewmembers often take different roles during

each phase, but their representation in the credits roll might not reflect this multiplicity of roles. This was the case for both Shankaboot and BILY production networks. Bass, Gilles, Christian, Stephanie, Zeina and myself took on a variety of roles at different production phases. For BILY, these were Mounia, Cyril, Jinane, Yasmina, Farah, Nicolas, Ramzi and Bashar. While Shankaboot credits were more mindful of these multiple roles, naming crewmembers on three separate occasions in a single season, credits for the BILY series did not reflect or recognise the production assistance provided by a number of its more senior crewmembers.

"Everybody used to help out on the set. Sometimes Valentina wasn't able to make it so Farah would double as an art director, sometimes Jinane would be stylist and assistant camera, it was always like that," Cyril said in our interview. It is not that Cyril and Mounia, who prepared BILY credits rolls, did not consider this 'doubling' professional enough to be included in the credits, instead it sheds light on an informal and off-the-cuff 'production culture' (cf Salaman, 1997) emergent within the BILY production network in light of the scarcity of resources available to them. The reasoning seemed to be that instead of pedantically taking note of who did what on which shooting day, there would be a shared agreement that everybody helps out on set. BILY's 'helping out' culture, or its being a friendly, informal production and the more formal, professional culture of Shankaboot is evidenced in the differences between their two credits rolls. This is not to make any claims on collegiality and camaraderie within Shankaboot, rather to highlight differences in how the two production networks defined themselves and texture the light they saw themselves in. These differences are evidenced in a visual reading of the T1 network above: Six people taking on multiple roles out of a hundred (Shankaboot) is hardly comparable to eight out of 19 (BILY).

But an ethnographic engagement with the "goings on" (Crossley, 2010b, p. 3) of the network allows one to read further into what - at first glance - seems like a big crew producing a big project and a smaller crew producing a smaller project. Between these two different production networks with a number of shared individuals, credits represent an expression of the differing emergent "definitions of culture" in the Bourdieusian (Bourdieu, 1983, p. 316) sense of the phrase. Du Gay (1997) meanwhile, would refer to these as different ways of 'culturing production'. As a precursor to the analysis below, it is worth articulating the role played by the Shankaboot and BILY

objects in the emergence of these different production cultures. Budgets, as properties or personal attributes of these objects, certainly shape the production process. Just as in the previous chapter it was argued that patronage structures shape and nuance the production process (by way of how much clients 'interfere' in the work of producers, for example), here a similar dynamic plays out with objects. Producing a low-budget series almost requires crewmembers to take on a multiplicity of roles other than the main ones they are there for, creating a sense of camaraderie and increased cooperation. A higher budget production, meanwhile, allows for a more professionalised approach towards the different roles required to produce a series, creating an air of professional accountability. Continuity errors, as an illustration, would be policed less in the BILY network because of the lack of financial resources to hire a continuity supervisor. These would be treated with more contempt on the Shankaboot set, meanwhile, because of the presence of a crewmember whose paid role is to prevent such errors. Finally, for lower budget productions with finite resources such as BILY, the choice of which role to fill at the expense of which other role reflects not only what roles the production-network-in-formation thinks of "professional" (Becker 1984, p. 18) but also sheds light on the network's (emerging) definition of culture. Choosing to hire an assistant art director over a camera assistant, for example, reflects the network's prioritisation of set design over cinematography (and which, by extension, could be interpreted as indicative of how these networks 'define' culture).

Rapprochements and Goings on

A visual reading of the network T1 already directs one's attention to the significant number of people who participated in the production of all three web-series. Further, a qualitative understanding of the "goings on" (Crossley 2010b, p. 3) of the network at the time T1 allows one to trace the formation of this network. Shankaboot was the first project to be produced in this network, followed by BILY and then Fasateen. Shankaboot was also the most formal, professional and high-budget of these productions, in stark contrast to BILY whose producers relied upon personal networks and contacts to secure the necessary production equipment and budget. During the production phase of BILY season two, Farah would secretly borrow equipment from Batoota Films, who produced Shankaboot and employed Farah as a production

coordinator, and I would help divert Katia's attention away from the temporarily missing equipment . During my interview with Cyril, he mentioned how him and Mounia would edit episodes at a Beirut cafe and upload them to YouTube immediately ("They had the best internet"):

"We used to shoot on weekends because everybody had a regular job. Someone would volunteer their car, someone else would source the equipment, and we'd all share lunch and petrol costs. A few episodes in, LBC gave us some more money because our ratings were so good. That's when we brought Khalil the colourist on board midway through the first season. We couldn't afford him before, even at a discount!"

As BILY covertly filmed their episodes on weekends, Katia and Batoota Films were trying to find a way to keep Shankaboot alive. Season five was to be the last, and with project funds running out Batoota had to downsize and think more creatively about revenue. These creative streams included giving community engagement workshops to Unilever's Beirut office, fruitlessly considering re-editing previous Shankaboot rushes into a feature film, and failing to monetise audience-generated video content on a poorly built "media platform" called "Shankactive" (which later led to a parting of ways between Katia and Batoota Business Manager Toni Oyry). Just as Batoota was running out of ideas, however, so was the patience between LBC and BILY's Cyril and Mounia who felt increasingly exploited by the station's refusal to adequately fund the series despite two successful seasons. Moreover, LBC had also assumed full ownership of BILY episodes, preventing Cyril and Mounia from publishing them on YouTube through Orange Dog Productions (the production house they started for BILY). While LBC's broadcasting of BILY's five-minute episodes just before the evening news facilitated the rise of the web-series, their insistence on ownership and underfunding led to its end after two seasons (cf Strandvad (2012; 2011) and the complexity of patronage ties discussed in the previous chapter). It was at this juncture that Katia was contacted by Dubai-based Yahoo! producers for Fasateen. Muna (who by the time of my PhD fieldwork had transferred to MBC as a producer on the X-Factor, hiring me for the project discussed in the previous chapter) had been tasked with commissioning the production of a socially-conscious, progressive web-series that championed women in the Arab world. This was seen as the perfect way to promote Yahoo!'s revamped video platform "Maktoob" (which, ironically for a video platform, means 'written message' in Arabic).

With Shankaboot and BILY both coming to an unwanted end, both sets of producers faced with increasing and unwanted uncertainty, and a Yahoo!-allocated budget not large enough to reunite the initial Shankaboot crew (made up of senior, well-reputed, respected and therefore expensive crewmembers), Fasateen laid the groundwork for a coming together of BILY and Shankaboot before it even went into pre-production. Fasateen (and previously Shankaboot) production manager Denise was able to convince Katia of the merits in putting together a crew of Shankaboot and BILY members. Not only would this be advantageous for the promotion of Fasateen ("from the makers of Shankaboot and Beirut I Love You"), but it would also provide an opportunity for Katia to mentor the younger BILY producers, nurturing their directing talents. I, meanwhile, was retained as the 'community manager' uploading episodes, shooting 'making of' photos, and leading the social media marketing of episodes in collaboration with Yahoo!'s in-house team. I would do this from my student accommodation at Edinburgh, where much faster internet speeds would make my job easier and less time-consuming, allowing me to also focus on my MSc in Sociology. It is this coming together of different crews and products against which I base my analysis of career trajectories leading up to - and including - the snapshot (or 'freeze-frame', as the above actors would call it) provided in the network T2. Specifically, I discuss the role Shankaboot played in Bass Breche's establishment as a leading writer of realist web-dramas and a mentor to Fuad, Gilles' transformation from assistant director to writer / director, the role BILY played in Farah's career mobility towards increasingly senior crew positions. before completing the full circle and revisiting the projects discussed in the previous chapter.

Findings

Mediated Pathways to Specialised Script-Writing

In T1, we observe the relation between Shankaboot and Bass Breche, who was the series' lead writer throughout its five seasons. While Bass headed the writing department, he was accompanied every season by a new 'secondary' or 'guest' writer (depending on reputation, standing and ego) in order to maintain the freshness of the script. Once written, scripts were sent to James Payne, based in the BBC in London, who acted as the lead story advisor. James' role was to ensure the themes discussed in each season were in line with the realities of everyday life in Lebanon and thus

conformed to the terms of the BBC World Service Trust grant that funded Shankaboot. Bass and James did not necessarily have the best relationship, however: "Critical but not controversial, always ensuring the right tint of beige," was his assessment of James' role. Here, Katia would often act as the mediator. While Bass was already a well reputed script writer with links to international markets in London, the significant role played by Shankaboot in 'introducing' him to Lebanese (and consequently Arab) markets cannot be understated. Shankaboot was a) the first ever Arabic-language web-series, b) the first ever Arabic-language production to win an Emmy award, c) produced by some of the most well-respected senior crewmembers in the region (Muriel, to illustrate, is still the only Arab woman to receive an award for her cinematography). In writing and participating in the production of Shankaboot, Bass was co-produced by Shankaboot as a leading scriptwriter in Arab markets but also international ones (through the numerous film festivals he was invited to as a result, such as the Emmys). Remaining grounded in local and regional markets, though, Bass was co-produced as the genius scriptwriter behind the web-series that attracted a previously-untapped viewership across the Arab world (indeed, Shankaboot's highest viewership came from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE as well as Lebanon). In lay terms, it would not be farfetched at all to suggest that Shankaboot was Bass's 'big break.'

Research on filmmaking careers often references the 'last credit' maxim, whereby the quality of one's next job is shaped by the previous project (see Blair, 2001; Faulkner and Anderson, 1987, p. 906; Jones and DeFillippi, 1996, p. 91; O'Mahony and Bechky, 2006, p. 928). It is through the accumulation of last credits of varying success that careers are "crafted" (Jones, 1996, p. 63):

"Film contracts, one after another, provide strings of opportunities for demonstrating talent and capabilities. As a result of being observed exercising these talents when given assignments, an artist or technician accumulates a history of performance results. The results are part economic, part artistic, and part collegial industry-relevant outcomes imputed or attributed to the contributions of an individual in the community, within which work of ambitious people is likely to be assessed by many other qualified and ambitious people. Attributes translate into professional reputation and into a distinct industry identity: the person slowly becomes a personage, a valuable commodity to buyers" (Faulkner and Anderson 1987, p. 889).

Bass's involvement in The Little Drop in network T2 finesses the above quotes. The company who produced The Little Drop, RTB Productions, approached Shankaboot's producer Katia Saleh, director Amin Dora and Breche individually. After being approached by the production company, Katia Amin and Bass held a meeting amongst themselves to discuss how to move forward with proposals of spin-offs (as the Little Drop was to be). Bass went on to be the only one out of the three to accept a role on The Little Drop under the name of his newly-formed writing company Scenario Beirut (temporarily causing fleeting tensions among the three of them):

> *"It's silly money. They couldn't afford all of us, and I was therefore able to place my own demands. It really is silly money. It allows me to work more on Scenario Beirut and pay young people like Fuad, give them an opportunity into scriptwriting."*

There are enough similarities between the Shankaboot and Little Drop scripts to give serious consideration to the 'secondary agency' (Strandvad 2015 drawing upon Gell 1998) of the cultural product here in mediating Breche's writing career. Both are web-series whose episodes do not exceed seven minutes and both purport to engage with 'social problems' in Lebanese society. The protagonists in both series are young males struggling to make a living in Beirut. In Shankaboot, lead protagonist Suleiman is a homeless 15-year-old boy who lives precariously on a rooftop and makes a living from the 'tips' given to him by the people whom he delivers things to on his moped, the Shankaboot. His daily life is an homage to the numerous 'delivery boys' around Beirut who deliver take-out food on their mopeds but also groceries and all manner of things to people's homes (but who are also responsible for the screeching noises of their brakes during rush hour in front of Barbar (from the previous chapter)), for example. Suleiman is on great terms with local grocers (he tells "Abou Fuad", who runs the local grocery store, that he only buys customer orders from his shop, for example), fruit and vegetable sellers, and families. Suleiman's daily line of work inevitably leads him to brush up with a criminal network whose activities mirror some of the prevalent issues in Lebanese society. In the first season, Suleiman discovers that a zaiim (strongman) he works with (by collecting taxes from stores in the strongman's area) is involved in the death of his friend's mother (a particularly sensitive topic for Suleiman who has no recollection of his own mother). Further, he helps his friend Ruwaida (a main protagonist) escape from the clutches of an abusive 'manager' who forces her into sex work on the false promise that he can turn her into a 'star'. In season two, Suleiman

works with the police to bust the strongman's criminal network that specialises in cocaine. In season three, he helps a migrant domestic worker escape from her abusive patron (at a time when it was revealed that there was an average of one migrant domestic worker suicide per week in Lebanon). In season four he discovers that his friend Firas, whose mother had ostensibly been killed by the strongman in season one, is now the leader of a gang of homeless boys. In the final season, he meets a girl who helps him uncover his mother's past as Ruwaida finally gets her dream job of becoming a television presenter.

Rawad, the protagonist in The Little Drop, is an unemployed fresh university graduate in IT, forced to work as a security guard for a shady warehouse in the suburbs of Beirut. The first season of The Little Drop revolves around Rawad's discovery that a bombing is being plotted in the warehouse he works at. In season two, the plot engages more closely with terrorists who planted the bomb. Much like Shankaboot, the plot of The Little Drop engages with the realities of everyday life in Lebanon. First broadcast in 2015, the first season mirrors the country's worries over the rise of ISIS and the spread of the war in Syria to Lebanon, and the second season expands on this. Rawad, for his part, represents the majority of Lebanese fresh graduates who are forced into underemployment (as security guards, bartenders, waiters or precarious workers in the service economy) or to leave the country in search of employment .

The similarities between Shankaboot and The Little Drop, in terms of script at the very least, and the differences in time between them (Shankaboot in 2009, The Little Drop in 2015), lead one to wonder what the role of Shankaboot was in Bass securing The Little Drop project. My argument here is not that Shankaboot mediated Bass's career, because that would be reductive of the complexities of the market in which Bass operates as a scriptwriter, of the projects Bass undertook between Shankaboot and The Little Drop, and consequently Bass's own agency. Rather, I argue Shankaboot participated in the co-construction of Bass as a script-writer specialising in realist web-series, providing a pathway for him to take the role of lead writer for The Little Drop. Indeed, RTB's initial meetings with the makers of Shankaboot (Katia, Bass and Amin) suggest that the selection process for The Little Drop was heavily informed and mediated by Shankaboot. Is this an expression of Shankaboot's secondary agency (Gell, 1998; Strandvad, 2015); or evidence of objects affording agency to their makers (Born 2010, p. 192)? During Bass's participation of the production of Shankaboot, did

Shankaboot participate in the production of Bass? While such questions all circle the ontology of the cultural object, a project of enquiry beyond the scope of this particular chapter, there can be little doubt over the importance of the role of cultural objects in the lives of their producers: Shankaboot, the Little Drop and every other production Bass has participated in are analytically inseparable from Bass's career. Bass participated in Shankaboot's production; Shankaboot mediated Bass's gradual construction as the script-writer he is.

For Fuad, meanwhile, The Little Drop mediated a reconstruction of his most immediate network since Der Fotograf and Karim and Rayssa's emigration to Paris. In providing Bass with the opportunity to mentor "one of my most promising students" in the scriptwriting class he taught at the Lebanese American University (LAU) in 2009, The Little Drop also provided his now ex-student (Fuad) with the opportunity to collaborate with one of the country's finest scriptwriters whom he had been fascinated by since 2009. Bass accepted The Little Drop contract under Scenario Beirut, hiring Fuad and two other young scriptwriters. At the end of my time in the field I asked Fuad what it was like to work with Bass: "He's my mentor," he said, "And I really feel I'm developing under him. He's already let me write three episodes for season two. " As Fuad and Bass wrote the script for season two, RTB producers were in the process of putting together a crew to produce it, eventually hiring Farah as the continuity supervisor. It seems, then, that cultural objects are not only analytically inseparable from their markers' careers, but also their production networks. I develop this claim further below.

Mediating Careers - Zig-Zagging to Seniority

In T1, Farah Naboulsi is among a minority of people who participated in all three web-series. A fresh graduate in 2009, Farah was hired by Shankaboot as an in-house production assistant for Batoota Films (cf Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2012), who - owned by Katia Saleh - had recently moved back to Lebanon from the UK, having secured funding from the BBC World Service Trust for the Shankaboot project. Farah joined Shankaboot from the point of its actualisation as a project, between its conception and pre-production phases (see Santagata, 2010). Throughout the Shankaboot seasons, Farah was promoted from production assistant to production coordinator. Indeed, Farah was among the few who worked on Shankaboot from its

first episode to its last. The amount and intensity of work dwindled towards the end of the series, however, particularly between seasons four and five, as funding began to run out and Batoota began to discuss future projects.

It was during this period between 2011 and 2012 that Beirut I Love You released its first season to great acclaim. The series was aired on the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation (LBC) channel five minutes before the start of the daily news programme (alongside its release online) and due to the unexpectedly high viewership numbers funding was increased in two separate instances: midway through season one and at the start of production for season two. Between Shankaboot seasons, Farah began to 'help out' the Beirut I Love You crew, initially as a production assistant herself and then increasingly as an assistant director until the start of the second season, when her role as assistant director was formalised. The informal nature of the Beirut I Love You project, and the extremely tight budget the series was given, meant that the production phase of its seasons was intermittent: crewmembers would shoot between two to three episodes on weekends (as they too had other, more full time, work commitments) which Cyril and Mounia would then edit. Cyril remarked that they always tried to stay at least three episodes ahead of the release schedule. This informal and collegial culture of the Beirut I Love You production facilitated Farah taking on an increasingly important role with each shooting weekend. Her 'stable' Shankaboot job allowed her to be available on most weekends (except when Shankaboot had weekend activities organised, such as pop up street screenings around the pubs of Beirut) unlike other crewmembers who were occasionally absent due to other work commitments (particularly since Beirut I Love You paid only nominal fees to its crew because of its extremely low budget).

With Shankaboot slowly but surely coming to an end, Farah herself was considering her own future and wanted to experience work in the camera and directing departments. During conversations at the time, she would frequently mention her categorical refusal to work in the production department for the foreseeable future. "I don't want to be stuck as a production assistant." The cyclical, bit-by-bit nature of BILY shoots allowed Farah to take on a variety of roles in the project throughout its first season. Farah would fill in when a camera assistant or stylist was missing, her versatile involvement increasing her standing and importance to the Beirut I Love You network. By season two of BILY, Farah had decided that she would like to work as an

assistant director. After both Shankaboot and Beirut I Love You had aired their final episodes in 2012, Batoota Films received the Fasateen contract from Yahoo! who were keen to draw upon the web-series hype at the time to promote their arabic-language video and social media platform. The budget for Fasateen was in between that of Shankaboot and Beirut I Love You, requiring some creative thinking on Katia's (Batoota Films) part, who hired a network comprised of younger Shankaboot crewmembers and Beirut I Love You crewmembers. Cyril and Mounia were brought on as co-directors (discussed more closely below), while junior Shankaboot crewmembers were hired as the heads of other departments. Bashar, for example, a camera assistant in Shankaboot, was brought on as the director of photography (DoP) for Fasateen.

For Farah, her increasingly integral involvement as assistant director in Beirut I Love You allowed her to stake a strong claim for assistant director on Fasateen. Katia was initially skeptical of the idea, particularly since she had not 'seen' Farah as an assistant director previously, and was worried that Farah might not be able to handle what was a larger production than BILY but a much smaller endeavour than Shankaboot. Cyril, Mounia and Denise (production manager of Shankaboot and Fasateen) insisted on Farah, however, and agreed to Katia's offer that Farah and Nicolas share the role. Nicolas had written, directed and edited a BILY episode in season two and was less experienced than Farah in the role, but Katia saw his presence as a safeguard to a production she considered pivotal in her career (there was a danger that Fasateen be a failed experience, "after the Lord Mayor's show," as it were). Shankaboot had been the reason for Katia's move from the UK to Lebanon where she wanted to raise her family, but she was finding it increasingly difficult to secure jobs for her company after the end of Shankaboot. "I won't do ads, I won't sell my soul, that's not what I came here for. I was hoping Shankaboot would kick start some funding for web series but there isn't a lot of money around."

It is worth taking a moment here to analyse the role of the cultural product in the relationship between Farah and Katia. Through the years of work together on Shankaboot, the two had formed an increasingly respectful relationship with one another, often referring to each other as 'mentor' and 'student', but the limitation of their relationship in Shankaboot led to what Farah believed was a 'tunnel-visioned' view Katia had of her. Indeed, Katia's involvement with Farah began at the start of

Shankaboot, when Farah was an inexperienced fresh graduate who "didn't say much, sometimes didn't work hard enough, but always did the job" according to Katia. Two years after the start of their relationship, and specifically during periods when there was very little Shankaboot work to do, Farah would freelance in other projects which Katia never seemed to take note of. Katia's relatively unchanging view of Farah as the shy fresh graduate was mediated by the strength of their tie (Burt, 1976) within Shankaboot: they were friends outside the production house, but did not work together outside of Shankaboot. Katia was not a member of the production networks that Farah participated in, and therefore had little information about Farah's work outside of Shankaboot. This was evidenced by the fact that Katia only relented to allowing Farah to 'AD' on Fasateen when Cyril and Mounia insisted upon it (as a result of the weak tie (Granovetter, 1973) between Cyril, Mounia and Katia). The relationship between Cyril, Mounia and Farah, mediated by their work together on BILY, was one in which Farah had very different attributes: while Katia insisted that Farah was a 'shy fresh graduate', Cyril and Mounia were adamant that Farah was very "focused and determined to get things done." Returning to Faulkner and Anderson's (1987, p. 889) words on film contracts acting almost as auditions for better opportunities, Katia's non-engagement with BILY during its production contrasts with Cyril and Mounia's position on the matter. They had indeed 'seen' Farah at work in a way that Katia had not. The role of cultural objects again comes to the fore here. Shankaboot restricted Katia's view of Farah. BILY, by contrast, acted as the social space in which Cyril, Mounia and Farah forged their professional, and by virtue of BILY's friendly production culture discussed earlier, personal relationship. In other words, BILY afforded (cf Born 2010, p. 192) Farah's agency in 'auditioning' (with reference to Faulkner and Anderson 1987) and Cyril and Mounia's agency in judging that audition worthy of 'better' things.

With Shankaboot the inhibitor here, in similar fashion to the vignette about Fuad at the beginning of this chapter, it is worth retracing whether it was BILY who got Farah the assistant director gig on Fasateen, or Farah's immediate network in BILY, or a combination of the two. While the previous discussion of Bass's career evidenced how cultural objects are analytically inseparable from their makers' careers, Farah's (and Fuad's) case sheds light on the inseparability of cultural objects from the life of the networks that make them, extending what objects "do" (Pinney, 2004, p. 8) from unto their makers as individuals to their makers as social network: BILY mediated Cyril and

Mounia's professional opinion of Farah, and the result of this mediation countered Katia's Shankaboot-mediated opinion of Farah. This knot of personal and project-based mediations, in turn, provided a pathway to Farah's assistant director role in Fasateen.

Across a larger timeframe, Farah's work on Shankaboot, Beirut I Love You and Fasateen, as production assistant and then assistant director, provided a pathway for Farah's career progression from production assistant to a more senior role in future projects outside of the world of web-series. This is evidenced through an aggregation of Farah's involvement in projects in T2, where she acted as the assistant director for the production of a music video, Titternig (T2), alongside crewmembers considered to be part of the 'core' of the advertising world in Lebanon (such as director Gilles, producer Marc and DoP Karim). At this juncture it is worth taking a moment to reflect on Titternig and what it signifies for Farah's career mobility. In the first instance, this was a music video without a budget: Eileen Khatchadourian, the artist, is a well-known stylist in the ad world, she relied on her friends and connections in the industry to produce the music video. Her good friend Aram, owner of Platform Studios (a company that rents out equipment and support for shoots) provided support personnel (camera assistants, electricians) and equipment for free, while Marc Fadel the producer arranged free catering. Crewmembers on set were not paid (save for the electricians who were paid by Platform Studios) and found the music video shoot to be a welcome break from the formulaic world of producing TV adverts. "It's just stimulating to be able to do something really creative and experiment with things," director of photography Karim told me on set. Indeed, the music video was something all crewmembers wanted to produce as it engaged their artistic or creative faculties away from the formulaic type of work they normally would do.

The Titternig music video therefore cannot alone bear the weight of being 'evidence' of the role of previous objects in Farah's career. It was, after all, an unpaid 'side project' that signified little about the job market. It does, however, signify that Farah's colleagues (in this case senior, 'core' members of Beirut's advertising industry) saw her fit enough to "AD a set like this". Farah's work on The Little Drop, meanwhile, complements the Titternig case and provides evidence of her increased standing in the job market. While still not as big a production as Shankaboot, The Little Drop's greater formality as a production in comparison to BILY, Fasateen, and Titternig, it

remains the biggest web-series production currently taking place in Lebanon. Farah was hired by The Little Drop as a script continuity supervisor. Compared to being a production assistant, then coordinator, on the formal and high-budget Shankaboot production, this is a significantly 'heavier' job with added responsibility. Whereas production assistants are only called on to provide assistance when needed, continuity supervisors are required to constantly monitor the layout of the set, actors' wardrobes and blocking positions (where actors stand on set and what they do). On set, scenes are shot according to logistical feasibility as opposed to following the chronological development of the script. Scenes that take place on the same day of the script might be shot weeks or days apart on set, and it is the continuity supervisor's job to ensure that actors are dressed the same from scene to scene . I drove Farah to her interview with RTB productions for her then-potential work on the Little Drop - this was around the time we were editing the AlJazeera episode. On the way back, I asked her how the interview went: "They asked what my background was and I told them I'm an expert in web-series and documentaries," she replied, referring to her previous work on Shankaboot, BILY, Fasateen and even Valet Parking. Participating in the production of these series, then, co-produced Farah as an expert in web-series. This co-production also involved her social network, it must be noted: "I told them she was great on Shankaboot," Bass told me in confidence.

Farah's move from production assistant / coordinator to continuity supervisor on formal productions (Shankaboot, The Little Drop) was mediated by her participation as an assistant director in a series of less formal productions (BILY, Fasateen). I refer to DeNora (1986) here to expand upon my diagnosis of Shankaboot and The Little Drop as formal productions, and BILY, Fasateen as more informal, as it is important to note that I do not claim these attributes to be inherent in the cultural objects themselves. DeNora (1986) argues that extra-musical meaning is co-produced by those producing the music and those consuming it. It is not that a piece of music is sad or happy, rather that it seems as if it is sad or happy according to those who interact with it (consumers). The nuanced point is important to make here, with important implications on this thesis: the formality of cultural objects is not an attribute inherent in them, rather it is how those producing and consuming these cultural objects construct and narrativize these attributes. The implications for Farah's case, and indeed this thesis, are that these cultural objects mediated the way people viewed Farah (through which she was able to access more senior roles). The cultural objects in question

(Shankaboot, BILY, Fasateen), with the differing ways in which they were seen as those around Farah (her colleagues), mediated the relationships between Farah and those around her as someone capable of handling the task of continuity supervisor on a production like The Little Drop (defined by her colleagues as a formal production).

Sinecure and the Co-Production of Selves: Objects and Careers

Farah's mediated trajectory towards increasingly senior positions in different departments draws parallels to another type of mobility underlying networks T1 and T2. That of the more senior Gilles Tarazi, who by T1 had already formed his "industry identity" (Faulkner and Anderson 1987, p. 889) as one of the most respected assistant directors in Lebanon. Tempering and nuancing the continuous 'rise to the top' dynamic proliferated by the core/periphery model (cf Cattani et al., 2008; Cattani and Ferriani, 2008; Ferriani et al., 2007; Platman, 2004, 2002), Gilles' case offers insight into an altogether different motive for mobility, particularly once producers perceive themselves to have arrived at the 'core[55]' of their domain and can therefore rely upon a degree of security in securing future work . Fresh off of being the assistant director in the international film Carlos (released in 2010), Gilles Tarazi was picked up by Shankaboot where he undertook the role of assistant director from seasons two to five (he was working on Carlos in season 1). "Things were a little bit too chaotic during production for Katia's liking and so she asked me to come in and steady the ship." Having spent three seasons as an assistant director whose measured-but-assertive tone when declaring "Silence on Set!" paralysed even the most capricious of young actors, Gilles was hired as a guest writer for season five (without giving up his role as assistant director). Here, he developed the plot for the series' fifth and final season with Bass. I interviewed Gilles three times during my fieldwork, discussing the role of assistant directors, his own journey into filmmaking, and reflecting upon the state of the industry in Lebanon. Having divulged to me that the main driver behind his becoming a filmmaker was his love for storytelling, he continued on our second sitting:

"I really don't see AD-ing as a disciplining role. That's such a small part of the job for me, it's an after-effect. AD-ing is all about storytelling: what can I bring to the table here to make this story better? To make shooting this story better? I think ADs have

[55] From the actors' situated perspective, of course.

much more influence on aesthetics than people think. It's about creating a mood on set that is conducive to shooting the particular scene in the best way possible. Sometimes I've yelled and shouted just so people become nervous, not because there was no silence on set but because that was the best mood to shoot the particular scene in. There is never a pre-defined role: AD should do this; AD should do that… It's always about what the story needs: How can I make this story better?"

Gilles went on to describe how he has been shifting away from assistant director jobs towards writer / director work in pursuit of more 'direct' involvement in visual storytelling. His pursuit of a change in primary role, however, contrasts with that of Farah discussed above, but corroborates the argument-in-process of this chapter: that objects are inseparable from the lives and production networks of their makers. Gilles' gradual and contingent transition from assistant director to writer / director is very much facilitated by the objects whose production he has previously participated in: "I'm doing less and less AD work now. More writing, more directing, more things I enjoy doing. I've AD'ed like four or five ads since last autumn." Gilles went on to elaborate that he only works as an AD on ads for financial stability. This resonates particularly clearly with Menger's (1999) description of artistic careers as a constant negotiation between economic necessity and artistic expression. Gilles referred to the French word Sinécure when characterising this particular phase of his career: "These jobs that pay a lot but are easy for you to do," he explained in relation to AD'ing. Platman (2004; 2002) discusses at length the struggles freelance cultural workers face in search of stability in the latter stages of their careers, describing it as "the paradox of freedom" (Platman 2004, p. 592). Echoing some of the critical tone adopted by Christopherson and Storper (1989; Storper and Christopherson, 1987), the author argues that the advantages of not being tied to a single firm were tempered by the fact that freelancers were fully responsible for themselves. "Freedom was not a final destination, but a perpetual act of (re)negotiation. The insecurities and instability, however, could be overwhelming," she states (Platman 2004, p. 592). Indeed, this paradoxical sense of being limited by one's own freedom was very much present during a conversation between Gilles and myself before my doctoral fieldwork. In the summer of 2013, as we smoked in the garden of Batoota Films, I asked Gilles what it's like to be a freelancer (for my Master's dissertation): "It's great. You're totally free. But at some point you start to think about your family," he said. "Now the baby is on its

way, it gets you thinking. Stephanie and I haven't saved for our pension. Nobody is going to give us a pension. And we're going to have a kid soon."

This stark transformation from a worried father-to-be to a seemingly in-control father is surprising, so much more so when placed in the context of Gilles' career transformation to a writer / director. And such a transformation cannot be explained by simply referring to his glowing reputation among filmmaking circles in Beirut, particularly because there are two interrelated but distinct dynamics here: 1) the stability afforded to Gilles through his participation as assistant director in previous projects and 2) the assisted re-production of Gilles as a writer / director. Indeed, in a freelance job market characterised by excess supply (Menger, 2006), being able to 'pick and choose' projects is a privilege. For Gilles, this privilege has been afforded to him by his previous production as assistant director of international, acclaimed titles such as Carlos and Shankaboot, which provided a pathway for his entry into the advertising industry in Beirut:

"I'm trying not to take many projects as AD anymore, only when I need them, only as sinécure. Because you can get stuck in it. It's the same balancing act every filmmaker has to do. At first you always have these dreams, you want to make a film. And then in order to survive you go into ads, and then you can get stuck in ads. And on top of that it's even more difficult to change once you're well reputed. A lot of people see me as an AD, so I'm trying to take less AD jobs and more directing jobs because I don't want to get stuck as an AD."

Gilles' slow transformation from AD to writer / director, can be partly traced back to being a guest writer on Shankaboot season five. It is important to qualify here, however, that Shankaboot cannot be held responsible for setting this transformation in motion, rather accelerating it. In fact, this was something Gilles had been trying to achieve before he became a crewmember on Shankaboot: "I met him at a Sundance writing residency at first," he told me when I asked about his relationship with Bass. Such an ethnographic understanding of the goings on of the network textures the analysis further: Shankaboot kick-started a transformation Gilles had been pursuing for years, affording him the agency to do so (Born 2010). Gilles' writing / directing career was truly mobilised after Shankaboot's fifth season in 2012, despite being set in motion five years prior to that in 2007. Within two years of 2012, however, Gilles had already directed a documentary, been awarded a writing residency through the Ayyam

Beirut film festival (T2), and directed a music video (Titternig), among other projects. This resonates particularly strongly with (Born, 2010, 2015b) statements on the multiplicity of mediations carried out by the cultural product: in the first instance, Shankaboot mediated the start of Gilles' transition to script writing in T1. Secondly, the myriad projects on which Gilles worked as an assistant director have mediated his transition towards directing by mitigating the financial risks of the transition, at a time when he is already considered a senior film worker, by still mediating assistant director opportunities and the sinécure formula.

Conclusion: Towards a Textured, Networked Consideration of Objects

The success of the Tayyeb project discussed in the previous chapter was what led to Remie and I entering the above agreement. Without it, we would not have known how "well" we work with each other and would not have had the idea to formalise our small food photography network. But then again, Remie would not have agreed to shoot Tayyeb in the first place had she been receiving regular advertising work (a step down from at least $500 per day in ads to $200 per day in independently-sourced food photography would have made little sense). Indeed, one of the main reasons Farah suggested Remie in the first instance was because Remie - after a brief hiatus from the ad world - was finding it difficult to get back in. Besides drawing comparisons with Gilles' sinécure formula (Gilles was a few years Remie's senior in both age and professional standing, but was also a man (cf Grugulis and Stoyanova 2013)), this return to the previous chapter textures the role objects play in their markers' lives and networks. Tayyeb afforded (Born 2010, p. 192) agency towards the formalisation of our food photography network, but the story ascribed to that project, its interaction with the social network that made it (Mutzel 2009, p. 879) emanated from Remie and myself. The argument developed throughout this chapter, that cultural objects are analytically inseparable from the networks that make them, still holds true and perhaps - when approached through a networked framework - crystallises Zolberg's (1990, p. 213) "middle level social structures" that relate subjective experience to objective structures and processes. There can be little doubt that the 'story' Remie and I ascribed to the Tayyeb photos as being beautiful and successful was inherently

subjective; there can also be little doubt, however, that this relational mapping of subjective experience (social action) onto an object is what enabled or afforded the establishment of a semi-permanent workgroup (Blair, 2003) or production network. Similar conclusions can be drawn from Bass's career trajectory: the stories ascribed onto Shankaboot are what enabled a transformation, a co-construction, of Bass as the 'go-to' web-series scriptwriter in Beirut, as they did with Gilles' co-transformation into writer/director from assistant director. Farah's case, and to a lesser extent Gilles', require analytic precision as regards time: the cultural object BILY mediated Farah's relationship with fellow BILY crewmembers first, and then BILY crewmembers mediated Farah's relationship with Katia. Similarly, as she zig-zagged to seniority, cultural objects mediated Farah's relationship with future colleagues in The Little Drop.

Despite cultural workers increasingly crossing over from one industry to another (Remie going from art director in TV adverts to food stylist in food photography) (see also Christopherson, 2008, p. 88), what cultural objects do remains relatively bounded within the specificities of form and genre: the Tayyeb project had little influence - if at all - on Remie's chances of re-entering the ad world or my chances of getting more film jobs. Indeed, it turns out that "the existential reality of the historical orientation of producers by reference to the aesthetic and ethical trajectories or coordinates of the genres in which they work[56]" (Born 2010, p. 192) does lead to reductionism and should be considered, particularly in light of the versatility of a networked approach in overcoming ontological barriers to sociological analyses. If the aim is to understand social processes of status creation (Zolberg 1990, p. 55 - 56), neglecting a priori the role of objects inevitably leads to a reductive analysis of these processes.

By the same token, however, the importance Zolberg's (1990: 212, 213) warning against "sentimentalising the arts of certain groups or permitting nostalgia to obfuscate (…) thinking" should not be underestimated. It was not only the genius of Shankaboot or the failure of Der Fotograf that led to Bass's mentoring of Fuad, or just the beauty of Tayyeb photos that led to the formalisation of a food photography workgroup comprising Remie and myself: these processes, and the role of objects in them, were necessarily embedded in their social networks, i.e. in the stories arising out of the totality of person-to-object and person-to-person interactions constitutive of the

[56] This in reference to Born's project of a grand theory of mediations.

network. McLean's (2007, p. 226) observations on the matter are fruitful in this regard:

> *"Networks are, ironically, more about flux than stasis. To keep them going takes cajolery, reassurances, and other sorts of artful symbolic effort. New entrants contribute to shifts in patterns beyond the control of most or all participants. Relationships with others to whom one is connected must be repeatedly managed, deepened, or contained as circumstances change."*

In other words, the agency afforded by objects is necessarily contingent upon the social relationships and networks these objects are embedded in. To that effect, I conclude this chapter not with a statement but a practical question around the numerous recommendations towards bridging the gap between the social and the aesthetic. Specifically, I ask this of Zolberg's (1990, p. 213) promotion of a reflexive approach, Inglis' (2005, pp. 108 – 109) call to sociologically analyse one's own sociological analysis of art, and Born's (2010, p. 182 – 188)) promotion of a more 'anthropological' analysis of cultural production: to what extent does a qualitative network approach allow researchers to analytically map out or trace those elusive moments where subjective experiences are translated into objective social processes? And consequently, to what extent does such an approach address or pacify the contention over the ostensibly un-addressable interaction between the aesthetic (subjective) and objective (social)?

I return to this question in the concluding chapter of this thesis but maintain this informed (not determined) spirit of analysis in the next chapter where, having considered the role of patronage ties and then explored the role of objects, I turn to the role of conflated personal / professional relationships in the formation and maintenance of networks of film production in Beirut.

God Moments: Relationships and World Building in Production Networks

Having first investigated the patronage tie between clients and producers within social network markets, and second the relationship between films, their makers and their consumers of the dynamics of social network markets, in the formation and maintenance of networks of film production in Beirut, this chapter shifts the analytical gaze to the relationships that constitute these networks and the (symbolic) interactions that sustain them. It asks: how might one theorise the role of person-to-person relationships in networks of film production in Beirut? The aim is to gain a closer, more situated, understanding of the "goings on" (Crossley, 2010b, p. 3) in these networks and of the vehicles (relationships) through which these goings on go on. The chapter contributes to the field of studies by nuancing academic theorisations of the situated experience of freelance filmmakers (cf Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010) and by setting forth an account of what happens when there are no "formal structures" for production networks (thus freelance filmmakers) to "drape around" (Kadushin, 1976), for instance. Further, the chapter contributes to Acord and DeNora's (2008) project of understanding how 'worlds' (in Becker's (1984) sense) are 'built,' and in doing so through a networked perspective providing texture to the network concept of embeddedness (cf Uzzi, 1996) by way of an ethnographic approach to multiplex ties and their emergent properties (cf Ferriani et al., 2013).

Titternig, a music video shot for free over a weekend in which producers had time off from their paid projects, provides the empirical context from which to depart and on which to pivot and ground the necessary analytic shifts between the temporalities of situated interactions on the Titternig set and the wider temporally-bound interactions on projects the network collaborated on. As Jones (1996) reminds us, it is projects that organize the work-based person-to-person interactions among crewmembers. To

this end, it is necessary to isolate research aims at different levels towards addressing the above research question. These are: 1) Analyse at the dyadic level how junior crewmembers relate to senior ones (micro level); 2) Identify some of the emergent properties of the totality of dyadic or micro level relations in the Titternig network (meso level); 3) Contextualise these micro- and meso-level emergent properties within the wider network T2 (macro level)

I am primarily informed in this approach by Kadushin's (1995, p. 205) work on French financial elites, particularly his movement between levels of analysis towards a more robust explanatory account. Here, he foregrounds in his analysis the structural: "individuals are necessarily seen in social structures," producing "explanations [that] tend to be structural rather than individualistic" (ibid). Such an approach allows to analytically isolate the interacting moments through which worlds are built. In the pages below I first provide an ethnographic account of interactions on the Titternig set, before moving from the micro level of individuals (such as new entrant Firas) and how they relate to others in the (meso level) Titternig network. Then, I consider Titternig within the context of the overall network of film production (macro level) that this thesis is concerned with, and in which Titternig was nested. The parallels with Kadushin's (1995, p. 205) approach thus become clear:

> *"As with many network analyses, the system reference shifts as I move from one analysis to the other. I begin conventionally with individual attribute data, … [then] I shift to dyadic analysis in which the units of analysis are not individuals but pairs of individuals. In the analysis of the moieties, the dependent variable is a social structure formed from the analysis of patterns of friendship in which the entire set of dyadic friendship relations is used to create a new analytic level."*

Titternig

The call time to be on set, an abandoned house about an hour drive north of Beirut, was at seven a.m. For electricians, grips and gaffers it was six - dawn. And so on Saturday, February 14, around 50-odd people - friends, partners, colleagues - woke up, separately or together, between the hours of four and five for what Lea (a production manager) describes as the "morning ritual." The sun rises behind the Mount Lebanon chain, its first rays touching Beirut at around 6:30, half an hour later. On that morning the routines of crewmembers were almost choreographed as they are on

most shooting days: the electricians congregated on set, having coffee and cigarettes to *actual* sunrise at six (the location was on the sun-facing side of Mount Lebanon) and sharing stories of how they woke each other up to carpool. Crewmembers, meanwhile, first glimpsed the sun from the highway to base[57], listening to their prepared playlists, sharing coffee and cigarettes in their cars having filled their packs and pockets with camera cleaning brushes and blowers, notepads and pencils, extra lighters and filters. Over the years, people in the network under discussion here have come to call such liminal moments of peace and quiet before, during or after intense shooting days "God Moments." The phrase is one segment of a shared narrative co-constructed by members of the network this thesis is concerned with, a segment very much compatible with another now commonly used idiom: "god is a great gaffer."

Most crewmembers, including myself, were involved in other projects from which we had the weekend off. While the electricians and technicians who worked for Platform Studios were paid for their work, the studio itself was doing this 'pro bono,' as were all other crewmembers. Gilles was the director, Farah assistant director, Karim director of photography, and I was the "making of," charged with gathering behind-the-scenes stills and footage of the production process. The first camera assistant was Karim's close friend, Nabil, and together they had concocted a two-camera rig: a Sony a7s pointed into an old Flex camera's open viewfinder. The Sony was by no means considered a 'professional' camera. Despite its 4K resolution and 256,000 ISO (the camera's sensitivity to light particles), it was still a point-and-shoot. We were there to shoot a music video for a song called Titternig ("butterfly" in Armenian) by Eileen, an alternative pop/rock artist who did wardrobe for ads. This was a serious, professional music video shoot, without a budget, shot among friends. Gilles, Stephanie (make-up artist and Gilles' partner) and Eileen arrived in one car, Karim and Nabil in another, the production team in another, and we shared with each other the stories of our pit-stops for coffee under the rising sun over breakfast: God Moments. I asked crewmembers why they chose to spend their two days off from shoots on yet another shoot. Karim's response best summarised the consensus:

[57] "Base" was not how crewmembers described it for the Titternig shoot. This is an oft-used word in shoots, though, and the laboured pun is intended to shed light on the distinction between some overlapping but subtly differentiated terms. "Base" refers to the place where the production has been set up, "location" to the place(s) where the shoot is taking place, while the "set" is the space inside the location where scenes are shot (cf Cluley 2012).

"This isn't work, it's fun. I already love working with Gilles, all of the crew here are friends and they're here because they're friends. This is rest. It's rest from the formulaic, bland cold world of ads and TV series. When do I ever get to play with this camera and create something beautiful with such cool people? It's perfect."

Titternig, to its network of producers, was more 'fun' than 'work' (cf Farrugia et al., 2017), an instance where creative expression took primacy over economic necessity. Reflective of a shared meaning given to the production by its crew, the above quote from Karim indicates what (Salaman, 1997, pp. 235–285) would refer to as "culturing production" – how 'work' takes on particular, internally-developed meaning within organizations (*ibid*, p. 238). This was a form of appropriating the organisation structure of work (from conception to at least production) for pleasure, play and creative expression; the appropriation a part and parcel of cultural workers' situated experience[58] but a "challenging" object of inquiry (Menger, 1999, 2001; Gerber and Childress, 2017) for academics. In the context of this thesis, the Titternig shoot is unique in its configuration as a form of productive play: complete with all the constitutive elements of 'work' (except, of course, pay) and a full, diverse crew ranging from electricians, to young entrants into the industry, to 'established' department heads.

Network Methods

Similar to the previous chapter, I draw upon two network representations as illustrative of these levels: figure 26illustrates the Titternig network. Here, the size of the nodes refers to individuals' hierarchical position within the network: The largest nodes are department heads, and then assistants, and then technical assistants (such as electricians). Nodes of the smallest size are those on which this on-set hierarchy is not applicable (because of their off-set roles), such as Nicolas Cardahi the editor. Colours refer to departments: blue is the directing department, orange camera, purple art direction, dark green sound (including the production of the Titternig single), bright green production, and red post production. The maroon colour refers to actors on whom on-set department organisations are not applicable. In this group, Carol and

[58] Indeed, it is common for members of production networks to - on days off - organise trips to a faraway place with a beautiful vista, or a rooftop, to spend 'magic hour' filming dusks and dawns or perfecting a frame where the rays of the sun pierce the clouds and shine a light on the Beirut skyline, with beers and joints and music. "God Moments".

Nadim were the executive producers of the Titternig album, Lea an actor. The red rim around the two nodes Eileen and Lea refers to their position in the network as actors (ie cast as opposed to crewmembers). For purposes of clarity, I have chosen to portray the actors as department heads in their own right[59]. Finally, the colour of node labels (names) refers to the professional affiliations of network members: red refers to Platform Studios (providing equipment and support), blue to Rez Visual (for colour correction). As in the chapter on production and patronage, relations in the network have been defined as "reports to", with Nabil the first camera assistant, for example, reporting only to Karim the department head, Farah the assistant director, and fellow members of the camera department. My analysis will focus most closely on Firas, Karim and Nabil at the micro level of this network, and Karim's, Farah's, Gilles' and Stephanie's embeddedness through this into the wider web of relationships Titternig is located in, illustrated through the post-hoc T2 network. Figure 27, meanwhile, represents the network at T2 drawn upon in the previous chapter and in which Titternig is nested. In this 2-mode affiliation network, red circular nodes are people, blue square nodes projects, and the edges that connect them are defined as the affiliation ties between person and project: who worked on which project. In other words, T2 illustrates the wider web of relations the Titternig production network was embedded in.

[59] This anecdotally reflects what crewmembers think of actors, as capricious divas who require a lot of attention (much like department heads)

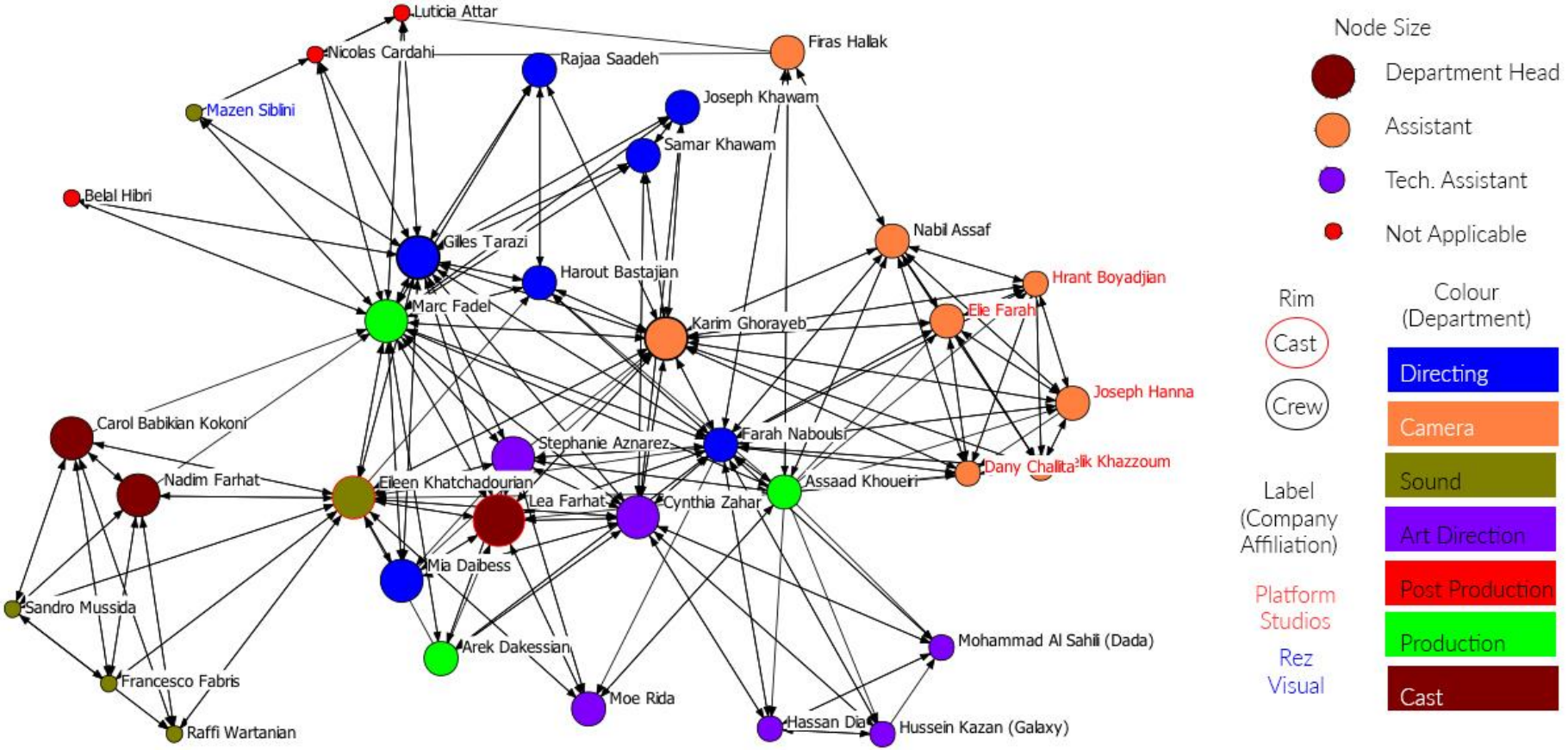

Figure 26: The Titternig Production Network

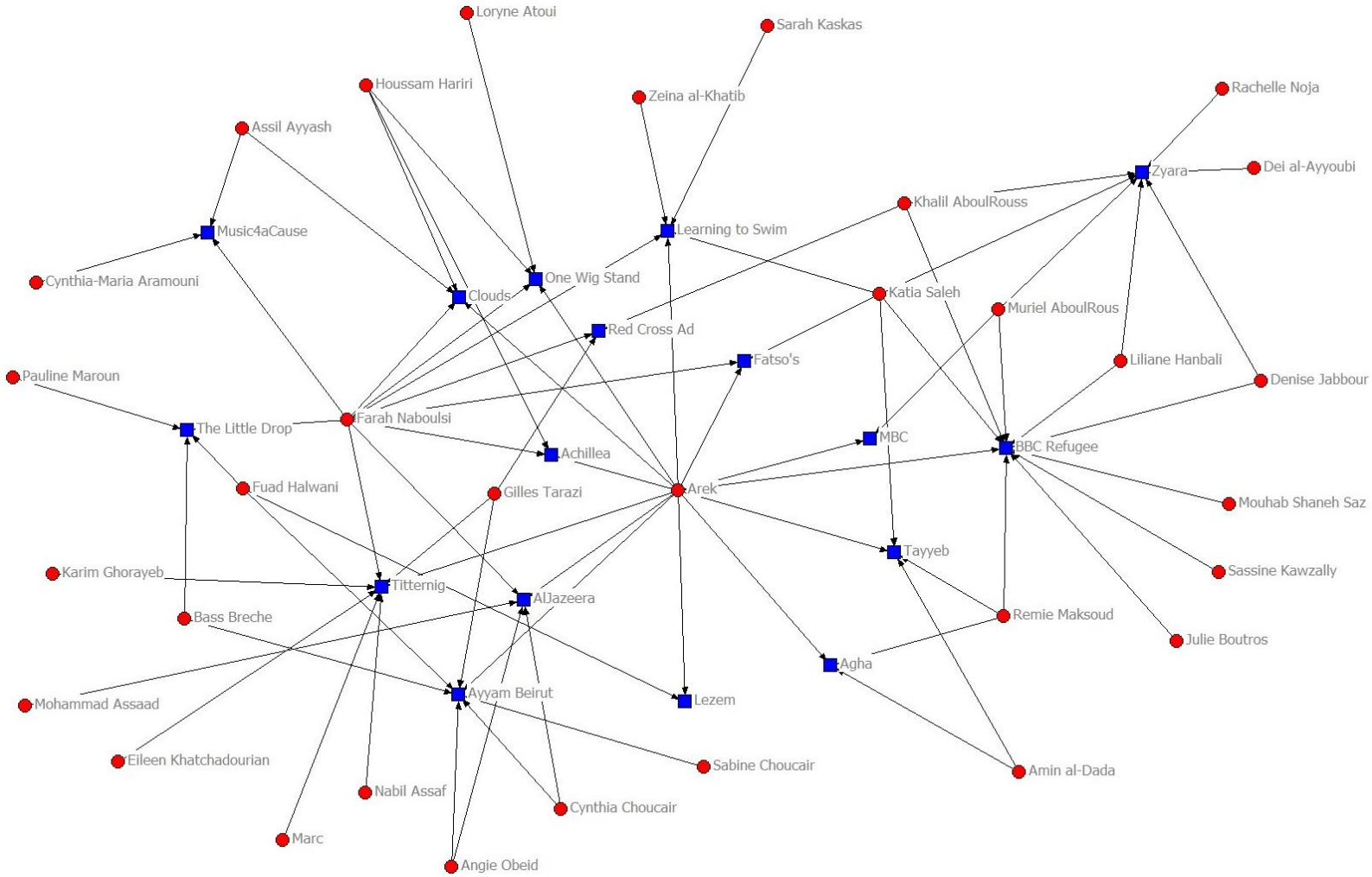

Figure 27: The production network at time T2

Findings

Challenging Populations, Multiple Motivations

While the self-actualisation or self-exploitation debate referenced at the outset of this thesis could, at a stretch, explain the participation of department heads and senior crewmembers such as Gilles, Stephanie and Karim, their explanatory power in relation to *other* members of the network is somewhat diminished. The electricians, for one, were getting paid. This was for them a regular working day with the added bonus that they were working with people they enjoyed working with. Unlike the stereotypical Lebanese creative, the crew of the Titternig knew the electricians on a first name basis, and had over the years developed a positive working relationship with them. "We've been working together for years now. She doesn't do a shoot without me if I'm available," one of the assistants told me, having dressed the set inside and moseyed out to the abandoned garden for his customary joint. But even if Dia and the technicians enjoyed their workday with benefits, it would be difficult to imagine Firas, the production assistant assigned to the camera department as e-loader, waking up that morning brimming with excitement at the thought of e-loading[60] cards all day.

It is his experience that is most challenging to understand: a young entrant in an industry full of young entrants willing to work for free. "Why would anyone wake up at 4 on a weekend to spend 16 hours transferring files?" I wondered. Was it with the aim of networking? Gaining experience? Observing respected seniors at play? Aside from a couple of jokes peppered across a couple of days, there was little networking opportunity for him (cf Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2010, pp. 13 - 16). There was little useful to 'learn' from this production too, considering the camera was a rigged point-and-shoot and the most complicated shot (in terms of technique) was two best friends revelling at the beauty of covering a flashlight with purple gel, pointing it at a transparent but fully-filled gallon of water, and shooting the subject (Eileen) through the gallon against a backdrop of computer-generated projections. Perhaps his participation, be it voluntary, passionate or imposed, could be explained by his multiplex relationship with Marc the producer, where multiplexity is defined as the

[60] E-loading is when the person responsible for the job transfers the footage and material from memory cards unto a hard drive, backing each up on numerous occasions and locations.

overlapping of the social, altruistic (friendship) and economic (apprenticeship) logics in a tie. After the shoot, a cast party was organised at a pub in Beirut that Marc and Eileen had close ties with. Firas was the resident DJ that night, and upon being complemented about his music tastes he informed me that he plays there every Thursday. This confirms Menger's (2001; 1999) statements about artists needing to take a multiplicity of jobs in related industries, but Marc's own close ties with the pub lead one to wonder whether Firas's participation in Titternig was partly due to the relationship the two share. While I was unable to delve into this relationship as deeply as I would have liked, my sense was that there was a mentor-apprentice relationship that the two shared that transcended boundaries of work and play.

Throughout my time in the field, young filmmakers or new entrants into the industry provided similar explanations to the above challenging phenomenon. They seemed to be fascinated by the 'magic' that their senior colleagues produced and wanted to observe or experience it - to be part of it. So much so, in fact, that they were happy to wake up well before dawn on days off in order to load and back-up footage for the next 16 hours. Informed in part by a reading of Neff et al.'s (2005, p. 319) work on junior workers being motivated by the thought of 'making it', I would ask these young participants what they thought of the more senior workers around them, particularly those seniors who treated juniors poorly. I wondered, for example, how they made sense of getting paid $75 a day compared to senior cinematographers who would often charge over $1,000. Their responses proved that it is not only academics and the public who attach a mysticism to cultural production, but filmmakers themselves too[61]. While they wouldn't always idolise the arrogance of some seniors, they certainly justified the discrepancy in pay and respect: "I respect him. He's made it. He's earned the right to charge so much and he's earned the right to be like that [mean and arrogant]", an art director friend told me after witnessing a photographer pour metaphorical cold water on an assistant older than him.

Drudgery, Pleasure and Public Displays of Understanding

The rationale that 'shamshata' (Arabic for 'drudgery') is a necessary evil, and that one has to 'earn one's stripes' was somewhat validated, though, when observing more

[61] As evidenced in the methodology chapter through Farah's quote of the day

senior filmmakers. For Firas, whose career trajectory would be expected to follow in the paths of Nabil (the first camera assistant) and then Karim (the cinematographer)[62], the "promise" Neff et al. (2005) discuss was embodied by the pleasure these two expressed (when shooting through a gallon of water with a flashlight). Indeed, here were two adults who were constantly in demand (for ads, television series, music videos, films or documentaries[63]), commanded respectable daily fees, and who seemed happy in their lives. So happy and comfortable, in fact, that they had had the time, energy and resources to 1) source an old flex camera, 2) source the state-of-the-art and extremely expensive Sony a7s, 3) play around with these and discover that pointing one into the other creates a particular aesthetic, 4) source the rigging material, 5) construct the rig, 6) play around with it and, finally, 7) shoot a music video with it. The fact that the music video was being shot by this rig signified the respect other senior actors in this particular film world had for them and the value they attached to the aesthetic they were capable of producing.

But watching Karim and Nabil fawn at the sight and use of this particular rig also invokes Strandvad's (2010, p. 8) argument that "it is the work with materials and technologies which produces the magical aspect of artworks." The rig was an object constructed out of technologies past (flex camera) and present (a7s). This construction might well act as the mediator between approaches that are not incompatible, extending our understanding of the goings on inside filmmaking networks. Crossley's (2015) work on body techniques, defined by Mauss ((1979) in Crossley 2015, p. 472) as "'uses of the body' which vary across societies, sub-populations (…) and historical periods," and loosely, constructively and cautiously drawn upon as "a fascinating sensitising concept which can open up new facets (…) of sociological investigation" (Crossley 2015, p. 481) in music worlds does exactly that here in film. For Firas, it was not just the sight of a happy-and-comfortable looking pair of adults playing with a camera and making money that must have been so fascinating. Rather, by virtue of his participation and membership in networks of film production, Firas was able to decode and understand the movements, body techniques and expertise displayed by seniors. The body techniques that must have gone into building the rig and that Karim

[62] It is precisely this 'professional' career trajectory that distances Firas' experiences from the explanatory power of more amateur-oriented DIY careers (cf Threadgold, 2017)
[63] Another nod to Blair et al.'s (2001) discussion of the overlap between different types of cultural work

exhibited in 'operating the camera' (indeed, as the photograph below indicates, this was not your usual camera rig with the viewfinder at eye level) were significant. In his work Crossley also productively draws upon Wittgenstein's argument that 'understanding' is a public and embodied phenomenon: "Understanding is practical and public, which is to say embodied," Crossley (2015, p. 482) argues. Firas must have certainly been fascinated at the level of understanding displayed by Karim (if the look in his eyes when watching Karim and Nabil was anything to go by). His, and indeed other crewmembers' fascination invokes another quote from Crossley (*ibid*, p. 483), pertaining to the relational construction of an artist as an artist:

"It is not for us, as academics, to decide what playing guitar involves or who can and cannot play. Rather we should explore the ways in which such decisions are made within the music worlds that are of interest to us, looking at the conventions which are mobilised in particular contexts"

Karim could definitely 'play guitar'. He displayed this 'skill' in building and operating the camera in front of an audience of knowledgeable colleagues well embedded in their production networks and their conventions. "They have earned the right" indeed. Firas, meanwhile, as he observed the seniors at play, was being socialised into the conventions and tastes of this particular network of cultural production. In his admiration of the conduct of Karim and Nabil, Firas was not only grappling with what constitutes "making it" (Neff et al. 2005, p. 319), but also being socialised into conventions of what is admirable, what "making it" looks like, how it is embodied, in these networks. In observing the body techniques and public understanding displayed by Karim, then, we might gain a closer understanding of why Firas chose to forego a valuable two-day lie-in in favour of two 16-hour data-transfer shifts. Perhaps the primary motivational driver here was a desire to excel, to go above and beyond the paid work he had to do, signalling a reflexive, intrinsic motivation as opposed to one based purely on strategic opportunities of networking. Perhaps, for Firas, this was something he had to do on the long path towards 'making it'. Crossley's (2010a, p. 98) reference to Adam Smith (1809, p. 164) provides insight here:

"The love and admiration which we naturally conceive for those whose conduct we approve of, necessarily dispose us to desire to become the objects of the like agreeable sentiments… the anxious desire that we ourselves should excel, is originally founded in our admiration of the excellence of others."

This was by no means just a learning or pleasurable experience for Firas, then, it was at least both. For Karim and Nabil, meanwhile, and by extension for the senior members of the crew, this was fun and games indeed: they had been well socialised into the conventions and organisations of their work that it was all second nature to them. While waking up before dawn on days off, despite already overworking oneself, could well be construed as a form of self-exploitation, this could also lead to a dangerous reductionism of the agency of these producers. One should be wary of wresting the "commitment and enthusiasm" and the value attached to this type of play/work (Crossley and Bottero, 2015, p. 39) from the situated experience of participants. It is true that the crew genuinely derived pleasure from the Titternig shoot in ways alluded to by Crossley and Bottero (2015) in their consideration of MacIntyre's (1985) internal goods, best explained as the pleasure chess players draw from simply improving their game rather than beating other chess players. These, in Crossley and Bottero's (2015, pp. 41-42) words, are "the rewards and pleasures that accompany the development and execution of particular skills and standards and which can only be had by pursuing the practice." Note here how Karim's words illustrate the role of internal goods towards his participation in Titternig: "When do I ever get to play with this camera and create something beautiful with such cool people? It's perfect." For both Karim and Nabil, their participation was motivated in no insignificant terms by this internal good: they derived pleasure from 'getting better' at shooting with this convoluted rig that they had constructed.

Here, the camera is indeed the site where three separate but not necessarily incompatible academic insights intersect: Strandvad (2010) would argue that Karim and Nabil's participation was driven by the pleasure they derived in 1) playing with the camera rig and 2) "materializing" (Strandvad 2011) the idea of the music video in collaboration with friends and the camera itself. Bottero and Crossley (2015), as outlined in the above paragraph, meanwhile, would argue that it was the pleasure they derived from improving their camera technique. The role of the camera here would be shifted towards Crossley's (2015) work on body techniques: Karim and Nabil derived intrinsic pleasure from improving their body techniques in camera work (the specialisation of the body technique illustrated by the above photograph - this was no regular camera like a DSLR or a handycam, this was a concoction that required specific body techniques). Karim's quote consolidates an explanation that encompasses body techniques, internal goods and socio-material drivers and recognises the joy of doing all this with people he enjoys working with: "When do I ever get to play with this camera and create

something beautiful with such cool people?" Ironically for a sociological, the 'with such cool people' part of the process is what is under-theorised in this chapter so far, but only temporarily so.

Figure 28: Karim operates the camera with Gilles by his side, as art director Cynthia (facing) and assistant director Farah (with her back) watch on

Networks and their Emergent Social Worlds

Crossley's (2015, p. 483) above quote on the world – rather than the academic – deciding what playing the guitar well entails, lends itself to being extrapolated into filmmaking and, more specifically film sets such as that of Titternig (i.e. the production phase). It is not that Karim was proving he could 'play the guitar' on set (his on-set role of DoP proves that he had already proved his skills long before the production phase), rather, the quote brings to the fore the extent to which 'knowing' how to operate the camera is a public phenomenon. This is illustrated in part by the photograph above, but is worth discussing further: while Karim's knowledge and technique in operating cameras is not under scrutiny, the images he produces with this particular camera, on this particular set, in this instance, are. And they are scrutinised by a number of

people: the director, assistant director, and art director are all present in the above photograph as Karim translates (and camera mediates) their own work on the production into a collection of frames to later be manipulated, dissected and moulded into an aesthetic object: the music video. Indeed, filmmaking is perhaps the most networked form of cultural production of all, in terms of the sheer number and variety of tasks it requires. (While in chapter four the focus was on the mobilisation of the client's subjectivities, here it is also the subjectivities of fellow crewmembers that Karim and Nabil had to mobilise (cf Farrugia et al., 2017).) If Firas had momentarily lost focus and footage he was supposed to be e-loading, if Karim's hands shook for even a couple of seconds during a key scene while operating the camera, if the art director had broken a key prop while dressing the set, if Gilles had misdirected the main character, if Stephanie had underwhelmed with her make-up, if the caterers had provided problematic foods, not only would the final product be significantly different but the assailant would be subjected to the wrath of everyone else. And this would have implications on their off-set careers. Film sets are indeed, as Bechky (2006, pp. 9 – 11; 2002, p. B2) argues, "temporary total institutions" in many respects.

One argument underlying this thesis is the productivity of a networked framework when studying filmmakers, artists or cultural workers. Here that argument takes its final shape. It is not just that cultural work takes place through patronage ties (chapter four), or that networks allow the inclusion of objects in the analysis (chapter five), but also that all this is anchored within an emergent social (mediated), collectivity. It is useful here to restate Katz et al.'s (2004, p. 312) reference to Wellman (1983): "Nothing can be properly understood in isolation or in a segmented fashion." Indeed, the case for networks is most poignant when considering the multiplicity and multiplexity of relationships on the Titternig set: While Karim and Nabil remain friends, they also take on a professional relationship of DoP and camera assistant. In the social spaces of on- and off-set, the professional and the personal seem to morph into each other, neither foregoing any of its characteristics but their fusion producing emergent qualities the dyadic level (increased support, understanding and humour) and consequently at the Titternig network level (a more light-hearted, humorous set). The networked perspective takes as its basic unit of analysis the tie connecting a dyad, allowing one to delve into tie content - "what flows through the tie" between two people (Ferriani et al., 2013, p. 8). Moreover, these ties are embedded in - and constitute - wider networks, allowing to situate in a more grounded manner the ties

themselves and the networks they constitute. Neither Karim and Nabil's friendship, nor its cyclical collocation with the on-set organisation of roles, are isolated from the wider context of the set itself or the off-set lives they lead: "When do I ever get to play with this camera and create something beautiful with such cool people? It's perfect."

Karim's quote invokes an inseparability of the artistic / aesthetic ("create something beautiful"), the embodied (body techniques of operating cameras), the intrinsic (the pleasure derived from creation) the socio-material ("play[ing] with this camera") and the social collective ("with such cool people") in the situated experience of filmmakers. To be sure, their situated experience is shaped by a non-hierarchical combination of these factors, forces, interactions and relationships. The networked perspective, approached qualitatively, allows, therefore, to contextualise some of its constitutive elements, more closely (and empirically) grounding academic theorisations of film production work.

Embeddedness & Multiplexity

As alluded to above, the Titternig shoot was a form of play for its senior crewmembers at least, but it was also an economic undertaking aimed at promoting Eileen's new album. This was work, carried out among friends who enjoy and take pleasure from this work. A challenging population indeed. This simultaneity of work and play, though, can be thought of in terms of the network concept of embeddedness: that "economic action [work] is embedded in social relations [play among friends] which sometimes facilitate and at other times derail exchange" (Uzzi 1996, p. 674; Granovetter, 1985). The selection of crewmembers, especially since this was an unpaid project, necessarily relied heavily on the social relationships (friendships) between these people - an instance where the social shaped the economic. But, in return, the fact that this was a music video provided greater room for creative expression and play (in Karim's words) - an opportunity to escape the bland formulaic work in ads. This, coupled with the use of a constructed camera rig that was more often than not pointed at a gallon of water, was therefore also an instance where the economic (production work, but without remuneration) shaped the social (the general playful mood on set). Moreover, most (if not all) relationships between crewmembers were ones that had been established in the first instance in the realm of the economic and evolved into friendships (Gilles and

Stephanie who had met on a film set many years ago; Gilles and Karim, and Eileen and Karim, who had met through their work on ads) or the other way around (Karim and Nabil have been best friends since their childhood; Farah and I attended the same high school). Most, if not all, of the relationships that constituted this particular Titternig network, then, were multiplex: relations that subsume different types of exchanges (Kapferer, 1969) - social and professional. In our quest of widening "our understanding of how culture works by offering sociology a window into aesthetic experience and individual / group "world building"" (Acord and Denora 2008, p. 227), then, embeddedness plays a crucial role. We do not, as Brailly et al. (2016, p. 319) assert, act as "atoms in social life," our behaviour is not "entirely defined by macro-structures" and our actions do indeed "depend on a relational context."

In order to more closely investigate embeddedness, Brailly et al. (2016, p. 321) propose to dissect the single multiplex tie in a dyad into a collection of simultaneous social and economic ties, represented in the figure below. They apply this multilevel model onto a trade fair for television programmes in Eastern Europe, investigating in tandem the social and economic ties between show distributors and producers, and are mindful of the fact that "the contexts of tie formation between two organizations and two individuals [affiliated with said organizations] are different in terms of temporality" (*ibid*, p. 320). This makes intuitive sense in the context of networks of cultural production in Beirut as well: it is well known, for example, that on feature film shoots that last up to three months, most crewmembers will have slept together by the end of the production phase. A professional (economic) tie established at the selection phase (where crewmembers are selected and sign their contracts) in the space of a few days becomes layered, over an extended and intense period of repeat 12 - 16 hour shooting days, with a sexual (social / pleasurable) tie between different crewmembers. In the context of the Titternig set, Karim and Nabil's multi-level, multiplex relationship illustrates the point best: friends since childhood and, cyclically, department-head and assistant since their agreement to shoot Titternig (and other projects such as the television series they were unhappily shooting at the time and from which they distanced their own selves in a manner first explored by Wei (2012)). Indeed, upon closer inspection, it is possible to engage more deeply with Wei's (2012) contributions by drawing upon Brailly et al.'s (2015) multilevel model of embeddedness.

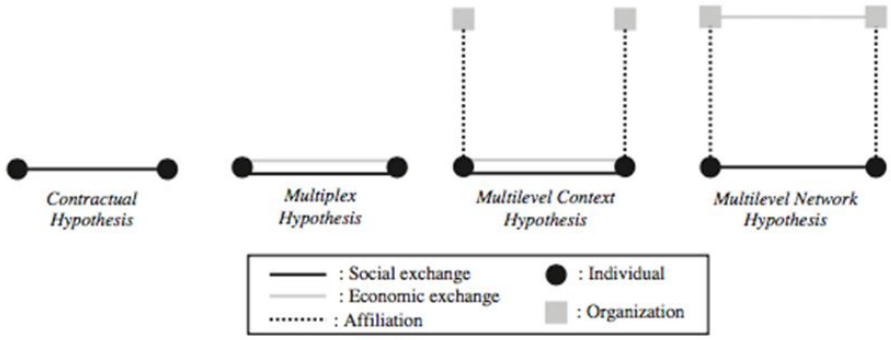

Figure 29: Brailly et al.'s (2015, p. 321) multilevel model of embeddedness

Brailly et al.'s (2015) work on organisations and the individuals that represent them provides a useful heuristic to understand such dynamics in the lives of freelance film producers despite not immediately seeming compatible with them. Freelancers can indeed be thought of as small firms in their own right (see Menger 1999, p. 546). Applying Brailly et al.'s (2015) multilevel model, illustrated in figure 29 above, on production networks comprised of freelancers therefore requires a 'skewing' of the understanding of the affiliation tie between individuals and firms: for freelancers, this affiliation tie is with oneself - a reflexive tie. Karim the person, to illustrate, is (reflexively) 'affiliated' to himself as a professional entity. To this end, whereas the actors in Brailly et al.'s (2015) network had the possibility to distance themselves from the organisations they are affiliated with (for example, when their organisation cancels a contract with the organisation of a friend, they can fall back on a 'don't shoot the messenger' / 'I fought against it but I have to carry out their orders' excuse), for freelancers this affiliation with self as person and professional entity is rendered much more sociologically intimate. There is a simultaneous dual-level projection of the social and economic self, then, the latter often characterised as 'DIY' (cf Scott, 2012; Scott, 2017; Threadgold, 2017) as figure 30 below – a post on Instagram by a cinematographer friend – illustrates. Wei's (2012) work on cultural workers distancing their own artistic identities from the reality television work they consider to be too commercial and formulaic illustrates this point, as does Karim's own admission that the Titternig shoot is a "break from the formulaic, bland world of ads." In other words, there is a tension between Karim the professional entity who has to do formulaic ad and television work and Karim the person who would like to express himself creatively. This tension is felt with most filmmakers in this thesis. Gilles' own sense-making of his working life as sinécure and Farah's description of herself as an expert in

web-series and documentaries further prove the point. The professional producer is also a reflexive consumer in producing one's own self: consuming particular cultural symbols and meanings that they themselves produce at work, as professional entities, and in their consumption of these specific cultural configurations producing themselves as persons. Gilles' words from the previous chapter illustrate this point: he works in ads, but what he really *is* is a storyteller. In Kadushin's (1976) terms, this is an instance where the production network creates its own emergent 'formal structure' to drape around towards a social (pleasurable, creative, self-expressive) and economic (music video) goal.

Figure 30: "The camera is not for rent. I am."

'National Produce': Emergent Meanings and Network-Level Narratives

This reflexive consumption of cultural symbols and actions alluded to above is neither restricted to the level of the individual node not to person-to-person relations. Indeed, we develop our sense of self by narrativizing not just our relations to other people (Crossley 2010a, p. 94) but to objects as well. Drawing upon Cooley (1902), Crossley (2010a, p. 94 – 95) argues that our 'things' are extensions of our sense of self. As Karim and Nabil's elation at operating the camera rig indicates, we also narrativize and give meanings to the non-human objects with which we interact. In other words, our relationships to objects are as constitutive of the multiple webs of interactions we are embedded in (and make sense of our selves through) as are our relationships to people. Most crewmembers in my thesis roll their cigarettes with a particular locally produced paper called Papier Damas (Damascus Paper). Unlike most rolling papers, these are not produced with gum at their upper end and therefore require the employment of particular body techniques in the rolling process. Having followed the process by which the network under investigation collectively adopted this rolling paper as a constitutive element of itself, of who it is, (cf Cooley, 1902 in Crossley 2010a, p. 94), I have observed not just the development of body techniques to roll with these papers but also how meaning was ascribed to rolling with these papers. During the Shankaboot years, when the papers were being newly incorporated into the life of the network, one or two crewmembers on different sets would publicly display their understanding (cf Crossley 2015, p. 482) of this new rolling technique with these particular papers and discuss with other crewmembers the merits of smoking with Sham[64] than any other paper. "It tastes so much better" was the first justification I came across. Here, in the early days of smoking Sham, people stopped to bite off bits of the top end of the paper to facilitate the two ends sticking to each other. Rather than smoking at every opportunity, this foregrounding of the taste of cigarettes became a means through which crewmembers started smoking less with the aim of enjoying their cigarettes more.

Upon my return to the field in 2015, most of the network had taken up rolling with Sham papers. The body techniques in rolling with Sham had also evolved, as now instead of biting the top end people would rip it off in one smooth swoosh, before licking the torn bit and lighting their even-more-customised-to-taste cigarettes (since one now had a choice of how much paper to rip off, reducing to their own taste how

[64] Sham is the Arabic name for Damascus

much paper they would like to burn with the tobacco). But a closer, deeper relationship of meaning had begun to develop between paper and network through the multiplex interactions between network members on- and off- set. The packaging of the paper had remained the same since its inception in 1905, and on one of its sides the words مصنوعات وطنية were written: "National Produce". This had been incorporated into the language of the network, alongside previously referred to maxims as "god is a great gaffer." Those who had not taken up smoking with Sham Papers preferred the taste of the more transparent rice paper - it was a matter of how they wanted their cigarettes to taste, as opposed to a rejection of network-level narratives. Here, Hennion's (2007, p. 104) work helps in establishing the link between different 'tastes', as it were: "in all this, one may say that tastes are an image of oneself tendered to others, even if these 'others' are largely imaginary." Using Sham papers, then, was a tending of self-images to fellow network members as subscribing to the 'taste' of national produce. For those who did not use Sham, though, this projection of self-image to others related to the taste of cigarettes, not film aesthetics. Indeed, over a period of a few years, and a few shared projects, the network had become aware of a particularly local aesthetic that had developed in their work: the use of colloquial Lebanese Arabic as opposed to the formal, written Arabic most television series relied upon; the adoption of heavy Beirut traffic peppered with the sounds of mopeds' squeaky breaks as a key aesthetic tool; the refusal to construct characters flatly defined by their sectarian backgrounds. One scene in BILY, already subversive in its plot following five characters from different sectarian backgrounds, is illustrative of this "National Produce" aesthetic: Mounia, a main character, troubled by problems with her boyfriend, gets out of the city to reflect and arrives at a hill where her ex-boyfriend goes for runs. As he runs into her and they begin to catch up, the tension between them builds up and he asks her if she has a boyfriend. "Is he Sunni?" is the immediate follow-up, reflecting the experience of myriad Lebanese youths forced by community pressure to not settle down with partners of other religions.

At the macro-level, then, emergent out of the repeat interactions of network members over a number of projects, are shared narratives that extend beyond single projects. In parallel with the gradual adoption of realist plotlines and the aestheticisation of

everyday life in Lebanon, was the adoption of objects (Sham Paper[65]) and the collective imbuing of these objects with corresponding aesthetic, political meaning. In the collective, reflexive consumption of the culture that network members themselves produced, a "world," in Acord and DeNora's (2008) terms, was emerging out of this network. With this world emerged a particular, situated, realist aesthetic in film objects (Shankaboot, BILY), particular objects of the self (Sham Paper), and particular meanings ascribed onto these objects (National Produce). To be sure, network members continued to work on formulaic ads and television series where characters were constructed with the explicit intention of not being distinguishable in sectarian background. The collective, networked, 'building' of this world of "National Produce" on one hand and the continuation of formulaic work are not mutually exclusive. Rather, these parallel processes shed light on an emergent network narrative that extends beyond life on set into the everyday social and political life of network members. Just as the inclusion of Cyril's phrase "God is a great gaffer" into the quote of the day on Fasateen call sheets, legitimising certain aspects of an emerging narrative to the overall collective, the meaning network members ascribed to Sham paper indicates the internalisation of these network level narratives into their own senses of self.

Figure 31: Body techniques of boom operators

[65] But also sneakers that extra support to people's backs on long shooting days and jackets, with materials that make no sound in movement, that keep crewmembers warm on set.

"The Morning Ritual"

But networks inherently invoke a sense of multiplicity, fluidity and porosity. Through a networked approach we arrive not at a single, grand and coherent version of truth, rather a collection of multiple situated truths with shared constitutive elements and shared emergent properties. That is replicated here: what I refer to as God Moments and National Produce are not single grand coherent narratives that network members ascribe to; individuals embody these differently in their own situated experience. The shared narratives and meanings (National Produce) alluded to above are embodied differently by different network members who are friends but also rivals and who cooperate both on and off set to varying frequency and degrees of intensity. When Lea used the phrase "morning ritual," she was discussing "the School of AboulRouss." This was in reference to Muriel and her apprentices. The "ritual" was to wake up at least three hours before call time on shooting days, spend the first hour reviewing the script, paying particular attention to scenes to be shot on the day. After this, the ritual entails arriving on set an hour before the call time of the crew, that is with the call time of technicians, gaffers and electricians. Often looked down upon, the relationship between 'artists' and 'support personnel' sheds light on some of the darker sides of film production, particularly in relation to hierarchies around education and taste. The stereotype around technicians and electricians is that they are working class, uneducated, 'crude' men who enter the film industry through the 'strength' of their 'weak' ties (family or friends in the industry bring them in). They are often treated as outsiders or imposters on set: support personnel carrying out the mechanical and menial tasks for the real artists to do the actual creative work (cf Becker 1984, pp 9; 18). This leads to a strenuous relationship between them and the rest of the crew, with department heads and crewmembers often accusing them of showing little respect (making crude jokes) or not being invested in the production at hand. Muriel, a senior female director of photography in the heavily male-dominated camera department, who remains the only female Arab filmmaker to receive an award for her cinematography, explains the reasoning behind her 'ritual' of arriving on set with the electricians rather than with the crew an hour later:

> *"They are part of my crew, my people. Most of the time they are old men with families, grandchildren, and then they have these fancy creative types raised on a silver spoon*

disrespectfully telling them to hurry up and ordering them around. It's not right. Treat them with respect and you'll see how they treat you with respect. What's so special about me for me to come on set after them? Because I have to hold a camera all day? They have to carry extremely heavy lighting all day, lighting that mimics the sun, provides the sun to my films! I work less than them. Between scenes I put the camera down or the first assistant takes care of it. No. I treat them with respect and they appreciate that, they treat me with respect."

Muriel, all her apprentices in the "School of AboulRouss" and indeed most network members under discussion know electricians, technicians and support personnel on a first name basis. Her suggestion that the work electricians and technicians do, carrying lighting fixtures, is no less important than her own work in framing and filming that which they shed the light on breaks the distinction references (although not explicitly condoned) Becker makes (1984, pp. 16 – 17) between "art" and "craft". Here, Becker (*ibid*) states that some activities in the making of art are regarded as ""artistic," requiring the special gifts or sensibility of an artist" while others "seem … a matter of craft … some other ability less rare, less characteristic of art … less worthy of respect." Muriel's own insistence on respect furthers Becker's (1984, pp. 16- 17) implicit argument that the distinction between artistic and technical or support work is socially constructed within the confines of art worlds or outsourced to markets (Becker 1984: 16). Within the School of AboulRouss, then, we already begin to see how certain actions help "build" (in Accord and DeNora's 2008, p. 227 words) art worlds, and get a sense of how art worlds themselves, including the networks constitutive of them, are themselves culturally "anchored" (now in Swidler's (2001, p. 206) terms). In the Titternig network, this was evident in the quality of relations tying crewmembers to electricians (respect and companionship). Building on Eyerman and McCormick's (2006) work, Accord and DeNora (2008, p. 230) suggest that artistic engagement "creates a space for experimentation with social, political, and aesthetic projects." The social and political project of the School of AboulRouss is crystallized in this instance through her insistence on respecting electricians.

The social, political and aesthetic of such projects do interact with each other and spill over from work environments to personal life. Indeed, one of the most defining characteristics of the network under discussion here was how some of the logics of working on set are transferred to everyday life. On weekends off, when there were no

shoots to work or play with, I used to make full use of the large terrace my small studio was bestowed with, inviting friends and family to a barbecue. A pattern extremely obvious to me was how all attendees who were filmmakers left these parties, be they in the evening or during the day. At the end of any such occasion, the filmmakers (members of the network) would all collaboratively return my flat to its previous state (clean and tidy as if no barbecue or party had ever been held there). They did this without even consulting me or discussing the distribution of tidying up roles amongst themselves, usually on the back of a silent look given by someone who normally works in the production department[66]. This aligns with the porous (networked) project of 'respect' that this particular film (art) world is built upon.

While the 'project' of off-set 'respect' cannot be attributed to Muriel and her 'school' alone and have since been taken up by the network as a whole (becoming an emergent network-level property), there are certain aesthetic principles specific to the school that also transcend work / life boundaries. A few years after Shankaboot, Muriel and Denise (partners in life and work) established "Home of CineJam" - a production company through which Muriel gave advanced filmmaking workshops and under which Muriel later began making films almost exclusively. One of the most defining characteristics of Home of CineJam is its extreme commitment to filming without artificial lighting. Muriel describes this as a move towards more "authentic" filmmaking and storytelling (and it should be noted here that in Beirut the word authentic has less colonial baggage than in the West). "Everything we need to tell stories is given to us by the world around us… Why Lie to people? It's not authentic," she would tell me on her balcony over coffee. I cannot claim to describe, discuss or represent Home of CineJam other than reductively, but my aim here is to isolate the aesthetic move (project) to film almost solely with natural light and how this has seeped into the everyday life of the network. Muriel and Denise live in a building that faces the Mount Lebanon chain from which the sun and moon rise. They have lived there for decades now and are on such great terms with the landlord that they have slowly but surely filled the remaining apartments in the building with friends and colleagues. The building has a life of its own and its social organisation is unique, but what is relevant to the discussion here is the ease with which residents can access the

[66] Indeed, it was only after I came to Edinburgh that I discovered that this was a particular trait of film worlds

roof (their friendships with people in the area minimise the risk of a neighbour complaining). On full moon nights, Muriel and Denise would hold "Moon Rise"[67] parties in a not too subtle reverence of natural light first established through work on set. As the moon rose and the small hours approached, invitees would start to discuss where to go next (usually ending up at my balcony). Muriel and Denise are notorious for sleeping early and waking up early: "We sleep with the sun, we wake up with the sun" was the mantra.

We thus observe a loosely-pathed and porous process of 'world-building' in process: 1) An aesthetic first developed through Shankaboot (and elaborated through BILY and later Fasateen) is 2) translated into objects (Sham Paper) and evolves into 3) a social, political project (National Produce) that embraces the realism of everyday life and is imbued with a politics of authenticity (realism) at work and in everyday life (treating others with respect, shooting only with natural light, sleeping with the sun and waking up with it).

Moieties: It's Complicated

Upon first entering the field, I was struck by the similarity of how Muriel and Bass (Scenario Beirut) embodied these aesthetic-cum-everyday-life conventions: both are particularly fond of realism and authenticity in film and everyday life. While Bass wrote in his scripts the sounds of screeching brakes in standstill traffic as aesthetic objects, Muriel shot in her frames the glaring sun and heat reflecting from standstill cars, with mopeds whizzing in and out of frame; while Muriel translated this fondness of authenticity in her everyday life by sleeping and waking up with the sun, Bass took time off from writing to re-establish Lebanese cabaret theatre, prominent prior to the civil war but that had been unapproached since. The two first collaborated on Shankaboot - Muriel the DoP, Bass the lead script writer - and they still do - Scenario Beirut write the script for The Little Drop, Muriel's apprentices operate the camera department. But Bass and Muriel rarely speak. While their apprentices collaborate, fornicate and create with each other, these two senior 'heads' maintain a safe distance. To shed a closer light on this, I refer to the concept of moieties that Kadushin (1995) borrows from anthropology, in his analysis of friendships among the

[67] These were also a not-so-subtle reference to their appreciation of Wes Anderson's (2012) "Moonrise Kingdom" in spirit and aesthetic.

French financial elite. A moiety is a "partition of a tribe into two rival, but also cooperative, groups" (Kadushin 1995, p. 2014), and the author draws upon this to illuminate the set of complicated relationships that tie French financial elites together. In my analysis below, I use the concept of moieties as a heuristic. I somewhat skew the concept and forego the partition of the network into two groups. There are more than two rival but cooperative groups in the network under study here, but it is important to retain the concept for its focus on rival but cooperative relationships among each other.

A similarly complex relationship ties Katia to the two. Despite the souring of relations after Bass agreed to take The Little Drop on his own, against the consensus achieved at the meeting between himself, Katia and Amin (Shankaboot director) that they would only do spin-offs together or not at all, Katia and Bass continued to cooperate. In 2015, Katia had already moved to Marseilles. When Farah and I went to the Batoota offices that now provided space for Scenario Beirut (splitting rent and office space with Amin's production house) to 'borrow' equipment to shoot our own projects, we were both taken aback by Bass's tone when discussing Katia. As two 'apprentices' or more junior members of the network, we worried that the Katia-Bass relationship was about to disintegrate. Katia had been planning on returning to Beirut to sell off or donate the Batoota equipment but had been delayed in this project. Bass, meanwhile, whose Scenario Beirut was growing in the office space previously Batoota's, was increasingly frustrated at having to accommodate the equipment of a production house that, despite helping him in the past, was now constraining with its remaining equipment the freedom Scenario Beirut wanted to take in there. "I called her and told her. If you're not here in the next three months I'm throwing your equipment out on the streets," he said, with seemingly little sympathy for Katia's circumstances.

On Skype, meanwhile, after dismissing our production of Learning to Swim as a "news report and not at all a documentary," Katia expressed her own frustrations at Bass, whose theatre venue Metro al Madina had treated her sister poorly. Tania, Katia's sister, was a singer and had organised a concert at Metro. The venue had cancelled the gig after deciding that not enough tickets were sold, leaving Tania (and by extension Katia) fuming. I visited Katia in Marseilles in February 2016, around eight months after all seemed to be going steeply downhill between Bass and herself. "He's a fucker, but I still love him. We might work together again on this upcoming project,"

she told me. Before leaving the field, I had confronted Bass about the worrying nature of their conflicting relationship: “No, it’s fine. She knows I don’t take her shit, and she doesn’t take mine. But I always got her back and she always got mine, we’ve known each other for many many years. These things happen.”

In similar vein, both Muriel and Katia were not too fond of each other during my separate conversations with them. Katia accused Muriel of being a bulldozer to work with (“It’s her way or no way”), Muriel accused Katia of not being authentic (an accusation also bestowed upon Bass and generally most people she did not get along with). In the same time that I had been having these conversations with the two separately, Home of CineJam was producing a series called Zyara, for which Katia’s Batoota Films was providing the sound equipment. This, in turn, meant that Muriel and Denise had to pick up the equipment from the Batoota office. For this they had to go through Bass, who was himself in the middle of a war with Katia at the time over the office space and Katia’s sister’s gig. A couple of weeks after both Katia and Muriel had spoken badly of each other to me, though, Denise was producing a BBC World Service Trust project for which Katia was the executive producer (ie had secured the funding for). She hired me as an assistant boom operator for one of the production units. Muriel was the DoP.

Perhaps not knowing how exactly the rapprochements happened matters analytically little. What is of significance here is that there was, at some point, an elusive and private (by this I mean dyadic, as opposed to exposed to the whole network) rapprochement. Indeed for this there can be myriad explanations that I am unable to provide and was unable to access for a variety of reasons, including my own positionality as a younger member of this network. What is clear, though, is that what ties these people together is multiplex, complex, cooperative and competitive. It is likely that this almost simultaneous conflation of friendship, rivalry and professional partnership is itself an emergent property of the multiplex ties that bind these people, and by extension the network, together. Despite the key role these three moieties (led by Katia, Bass, and Denise and Muriel) played in establishing - or starting the establishment of - the shared set of conventions, principles, and projects that I have called National Produce (the ‘world’ in Acord and DeNora’s (2008) sense) above, through Shankaboot, then BILY, then Fasateen (through which BILY producers

became apprentices of Muriel and Katia), they all embody and live National Produce in their own, sometimes conflicting, ways.

For younger network members like myself, who hold Katia, Bass, Muriel and Denise in high regard, such conflicts (and the secrecy around their resolution) lead to confusion and introspection. A conversation I had with fellow production assistants towards the end of Shankaboot, revolving around a disagreement between Katia and Muriel over the Emmy Award we had just received, sheds light on these confusions. Zeina, for instance, argued that while she respected both conflicting parties she was of the opinion that one of them was too often disrespectful toward the other. Farah, meanwhile, was torn between all the things Muriel had taught her and the years Katia spent nurturing her. "They can fight all they want. I won't get involved in it and I won't change my opinion of either of them." These reactions contrasted with the nonchalance of their more senior apprentices. Bashar, for instance, who had been working with Muriel before I met either of them, was dismissive: "This always happens, they'll get over it."

Storied Selves

"Our sense of self is achieved within a narrative mode (…) Actors build a sense of 'me' through a historical reconstruction of scenes, dramas or sequences of events in which they have been involved, that is, by way of stories in which they are the central protagonist. The me is a character in a story told by the I" (Crossley 2010a, p. 94)

The events, and stories of events, discussed in the previous section only illuminate one part of Katia's, Bass's, Denise's and Muriel's 'selves'. Throughout the sets of stories they have each told about each other (stories which I have only been privy to since Shankaboot, culminating in my active yet necessarily incomplete investigation of them during my time in the field), and in which they are the central characters, they have painted themselves in certain lights and others in other lights. For Katia, Bass is the talented writer whose work (his 'work' here necessarily being an object co-produced out of their producer-scriptwriter interactions) she respects and appreciates. Being the wise, understanding and determined producer and person that she is, she is willing to forego his transgressions on those occasions where he acts in his own individual, rather than their own dyadic, interests. Muriel, meanwhile, is the talented cinematographer with whom Katia has difficulty in sustaining interactions, but these

are still maintained through a mediator - the more conciliatory Denise. For Muriel, to herself the female cinematographer unrelenting of her values and ideals (she refuses to shoot with artificial lighting, and wakes up and sleeps with the sun) Katia is an able producer who bends too flexibly to the rules and conditions imposed by outsiders and in doing so falls short of the threshold to be deemed authentic. While Muriel retains some sympathy for Katia, her opinion of Bass is categorical: he is the sell-out who would write anything to further his own reputation[68].

While these stories of each other are necessarily reductive or misrepresentative of the other in some way, it is clear that they define both subject and author through the latter's reflexive consumption of particular symbolic and cultural elements of past events. There is a temporal, relational and situated process of networked selves at play here: first actors interact (they worked together), negotiating in interaction their selves in relation to each other (they enjoyed working together or they didn't) and then make sense of recent interactions and events by reflexively incorporating particular symbolic elements of recent interaction onto their own storied pasts (Crossley 2010a, p. 102). My ethnographic data is incomplete and prevents me from writing a full account of how every network member narrativizes the other, and I refrain from writing an account of everything I have learned ethnographically so as not to be repetitive and to respect the terms of consent with my interlocutors. As I allude to in the methodology chapter of this thesis, my time in the field transformed me, in my own narratives of self and in theirs, from a young entrant walking the uncertain path of "making it" (Neff et al. 2005, p. 319; cf Scott, 2012; 2017) to the resident sociologist of the network. But the significance of these ethnographically collected and constructed accounts is that they cannot be attributed to the friendship or economic characteristics of these relationships alone, but to their multiplexity, the embeddedness of these relationships. In other words, to the sociological intimacy with which the self's affiliation with itself as an economic entity is managed. Relationships in (freelance) networks of cultural production are necessarily set against a market backdrop. This is not to say that people 'fake' friendships to reap their economic benefits, rather to argue that the personal and professional, the social and the economic, are almost inseparable in such contexts except for analytic purposes.

[68] Of course, these are quite situated perspectives reductive of the individuals in question

Complex Freedoms and the Way of the World

Bass's decision to act against his agreement with Katia and Amin and take up the "silly money" on offer to write The Little Drop (discussed in the previous chapter) sheds light on the extent of this intimacy in managing the self as social and economic entity. Bass explained that the money he used the Little Drop money to establish Scenario Beirut and develop young, promising scriptwriters such as Fuad through it. Here his relationship with Fuad as his apprentice informed the economic decision, but this was not incompatible with the economic opportunities underlying the establishment of Scenario Beirut. It is worth taking note here, in further substantiation of Menger's (2001; 1999) statement that artists hold down a multiplicity of jobs in related industries, of Bass's investment in Metro al-Madina, the theatre venue discussed above. Towards the end of my time in the field, Bass had redirected this theatre revenue into another investment, a restaurant: Molo. Muriel and Denise, meanwhile, had invested in Home of CineJam based on similar reasonings and Muriel was increasingly, though still reluctantly, willing to look beyond the "laziness" of current filmmaking students, reaping more and more revenue from lectures and workshops at the university she (and Karim and others in the network) had graduated from. This thinking invokes Dex et al.'s (2000, p. 299) work on established cultural workers' increased preoccupation with stability later in life. Conversations with Gilles also substantiate Dex et al.'s (2000) claims: From a conversation in 2013 in which he divulged anxiety and doubt over his and Stephanie's ability to provide a stable life to their new-born son Malek ("we are freelancers, we don't get pensions or job security"), to his discussions of sinécure with me that laid out the terms of how they, as parents, planned on being able to provide for their son in the future ("I do as much work as we need, and then I turn to myself and my family"). In what seemed like apt (but also tragically poetic, owing to the scores of people leaving the country for pastures anew) closure to my own time in the field, I ran into Gilles, Stephanie and Malek at the Istanbul airport on my way back to Edinburgh. They were moving to France. "The industry is just a tiny bit more respectful and humane over there, there are more interesting opportunities there, and freelancers are protected to some extent by law," Stephanie explained while Gilles and Malek picked croissants.

Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2010) characterisation of freelance cultural work as "a very complicated version of freedom" captures well the essence of the above experiences, but we must be wary of explanations that do not foreground the situatedness and embeddedness of these freedoms. While the authors are rather critical of the uncertainty and complexity of this freedom, I note that none of Denise, Muriel, Gilles, Stephanie, Bass or indeed Katia (who moved to France for similar reasons in 2013) are critical of their own situated experience. Instead, there seems to be a tacit acceptance that this is indeed the way of their world. Indeed, it seems it is only us academics who find such realities challenging to understand (cf Menger 2001; 1999). Their repeat collaborations despite sometimes vicious disagreements are perhaps testament to this acceptance that in the absence of stable jobs, contracts, pension schemes, members of production networks have to carve out their own freedoms. Moieties indeed, in the sense that the need to cooperate and have friends trumps or counter-balances rivalries that arise.

Continuity

Back on the set of Titternig and in the everyday lives of those network members who see themselves as apprentices of Katia, Denise, Muriel and Bass, there is a different, younger, sense of continuity. For Karim and Farah who participated in Titternig, and for Layal, Pauline, Remie, Rachelle, Jean, Julie, Bashar, Cyril, Mounia, Fuad and those network members who were elsewhere while Titternig was shot, Katia, Denise, Muriel and Bass had earned their stripes and "made it" in Neff et al.'s (2005) terms. This younger generation of filmmakers, mentored and befriended by the former four, work more rigorously than their senior mentors as they themselves look to "make it," heeding the advice of their seniors not to overwork themselves and end up like the two people who I have only heard of but network members knew personally, who died on the drive back home from 36-hour shooting days or a few weeks of non-stop shooting. But it is more than the continued relations and well-intentioned advice that flows through the network that maintains the 'world-ness' of this collective. It is the "morning ritual" of waking up three hours ahead of the call time that camera operators and cinematographers abide by religiously and other department members appropriate to their own situatedness, or their own interpretation to the "National Produce" aesthetic they have inherited from their mentors, or the insistence of production department members to serve ice cream and beer to the crew on unexpected down-time on set to lift spirits, or

certainly the respect they show to their fellow crewmembers - particularly electricians, technicians and what Becker calls “the supporting cast.”

Conclusion: Attachments and Emergent Properties

Having focused on markets, and then cultural objects, in this chapter I have directed the analytic gaze at the personal relationships through which networks of film production are formed and maintained in Beirut. Similar to the previous chapter on objects I have adopted a longitudinal framework, albeit this time considering the person-to-person – as opposed to person-to-object - relations constitutive of networks. But as Mutzel (2009) reminds us, only humans can tell stories. Previously the focus was on those stories told by consumers, through their consumption, of the cultural objects and their makers. But what are the stories that emerge out of the durable, repeat collaborations among the makers of these films and cultural objects? What kinds of stories and narratives emerge out of relationships, networks of relationships, that with time move beyond professional collaboration and into the personal? As I hope to have shown above, ‘work’ gets redimensionalised as ‘fun,’ working practices on set evolve into social and political projects off it, and images start to be given their own names.

I began the chapter by considering what might have motivated a group of friends to forego precious days off from work to do more work, for free. I considered what might have motivated these people to work more. I found that junior members could have been motivated to do so by relations of apprenticeship to more senior network members: by a desire to be co-present with and learn from these seniors at play. young crewmembers justified disrespectful seniors by arguing that they had earned the right to be disrespectful. One has to earn one’s stripes making films, the seniors had earned theirs, and the juniors were still had some earning to do. This is similar to the instrumental way in which unpaid interns see the unpaid internships they are in (Shade and Jacobson, 2015). For the more senior crewmembers, though, what seemed to motivate them was the sheer joy of getting better at shooting with a weird camera (cf Crossley and Bottero, 2015; Strandvad, 2010). This was a way of re-appropriating the organization of their work, for fun. Furthermore, I found that the practices, rituals and technologies that network members considered to be ‘fun’ in fact related back to

the shared narratives established over time through previous work engagements together.

I then shifted towards the level of the whole network, considering some of the practices and meanings passed on to network members from their senior colleagues and mentors. Respecting support staff and preferring natural light became imbued with significance outside of their boundaries. Senior crewmembers of Titternig all actualized these shared narratives and everyday-practices-given-new-meaning in their own lives, retaining some elements and foregoing others over time. Similarly, as juniors in the network T1 became seniors in T2, I considered the complex enduring relationships that tie senior T1 network members together, skewing Kadushin's (1995) use of the concept of moieties. Taken in aggregation, I argued, these shared narratives and their situated, contingent expressions in everyday life, are emergent properties of the durability of the network from T1 to T2.

So how does the emergence of network-level meaning contribute to the sociology of cultural production? It has been primarily object-oriented ontologists who have so far most seriously taken up Zolberg's (1990, p. 213) project of a "reflexive" sociology of the arts mindful of the "middle level social structures" through which the subjective becomes objective. Gomart and Hennion's (1999) work proposes bridging this gap by way of a sociology of attachments, where objects mediate subjective experience and social agents consciously submit to the affordances of these objects. While their work is based on amateur music lovers and drug users, their approach bears significant explanatory power in the context of this chapter. It would not be too farfetched, for example, to suggest that the primary 'mover' behind the Titternig shoot was indeed an attachment, an *addiction*, to the subjective states produced by this form of productive play: to God Moments, as it were. Karim and Nabil, to illustrate, prepared for and anticipated moments of absolute elation when pointing a camera and a flashlight at a gallon of water by foregoing their weekend off; they doctored their submission to the needs of the cultural-object-in-making, to 'what *it* needs,' and they loved every minute of it. "It's perfect!" Similarly, the move towards smoking less quantities of tobacco but ensuring that, whenever they did smoke, rolling papers provided more pleasure further substantiates the explanatory power of a sociology of attachments - smoking less, but smoking to enjoy. Why else would people be willing to wake up before dawn on cold February mornings to go halfway up a mountain and shoot something they weren't

even getting paid to shoot, on days in which they were supposed to be resting their already overworked bodies?

> *"Passion, emotion, being dazzled, elation, possession, trance, all of these are instances of events in which there is no action - in either a traditional or a radical sense of the term. They describe movement in which loss of control is accepted and prepared for. One's hand is given over to an other, and one abandons one's being to what seizes it. As we have noted, we do not take 'passion' to describe the subject's instrumental mastery of things, nor her mechanical determination of things. Rather, passion is the abandonment of forces to objects and the suspension of the self"* (Gomart and Hennion 1999, pp. 226-227).

Having said that, while Gomart and Hennion's (1999) sociology of attachments certainly can explain many aspects of the situated experience of production networks and their members, and in doing so addresses to a degree the gaps identified by Zolberg (1990), it risks reducing some of the complex qualities and characteristics of person-to-person relations. Karim and Nabil, to illustrate, seemed as 'addicted' to the collective social quality of the Titternig experience as to the pleasurable experience created by shooting the gallon of water: "When do I ever get to play with this camera and create something beautiful with such cool people?" To an extent, then, while Gomart and Hennion (1999) address some of Zolberg's (1990) concerns, in doing so they also create new concerns to be addressed. These moments in which the self becomes suspended through attachment are themselves narrativized in hindsight, and incorporated into our storied selves. It is only *after* the suspension of self in a 'god moment' that God Moments becomes part of our self-narratives. As Becker (1953) reminds us, amateur marijuana users are socialised into narrativizing their experiences as pleasurable. Similarly, then, it is only after a hypothetical newcomer 1) enjoys a sunset, 2) realises that other network members also enjoy the sunset and even 3) have a name for such moments (God Moments) that future moments of suspension of self in sunset are narrativized as God Moments themselves. One is socialised into enjoying certain things; it is networks that do the socialising, specifically of those emergent meanings and narratives that label a certain experience as pleasurable, certain ways of being with support staff as fair.

But we don't all like the stories we hear in the same way. Acord and DeNora(2008) argue that "examining the arts in empirical situations of "action" promises to widen our understanding of how culture works by offering sociology a window into aesthetic

experience and individual / group "world building" (*ibid*, p. 227). Their work bears a certain resemblance to Becker's (1974) paper in which he also examines art through the framework of (collective) action, and almost explicitly sets forth a typology of the middle level social structures that Zolberg (1990) suggests can bridge the gap between the social and the aesthetic. In setting out an agenda to understand how, "whether and how come cultural elements control, anchor or organize others" (Acord and DeNora 2008, p. 227) the authors are seeking to uncover the middle level social structures that Zolberg (1990) speaks of. Drawing upon Witkin and DeNora's (1997) notion of aesthetic agency as that which translates the subjective to the objective within the confines of Zolberg's (1990) middle level social structures. While their approach might be construed as too individualistic (they make no mention of how one's aesthetic agency could be shaped by others, or can draw upon symbols and codes emergent through interaction with others), this does not necessarily refute the explanatory power of their approach: Karim, Nabil, Farah and network members do indeed exercise their aesthetic agency in reflexively consuming and reproducing certain cultural symbols that they themselves have produced at work. Not all of Muriel's disciples refuse to shoot without artificial lighting. They embody and perform these shared narratives in their own ways. Farah does not necessarily wake up three hours before call time, but she certainly treats electricians with respect. Therefore, while Acord and DeNora's (2008) work seems a step in the right direction towards identifying these middle level social structures by way of their arts-in-action approach that emphasises the aesthetic agency actors exercise within these middle level structures, there still lacks an articulation of what these structures actually are. I believe this illustrates the potential of conducting relational research towards approaching these structures. It is only through a relational paradigm that we can explain the *emergence* of the *space in which* (ie the structures around) this agency is exerted, as a "temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (…) but also oriented towards the future" (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, p. 963).

Conclusion: Casting Nets and Framing Films

So how *are* networks of film production in Beirut formed and maintained? Thus far I have addressed three relational 'planes' through which formation and maintenance are 'done': markets, objects and relationships. Before I begin to synthesize these into a coherent 'whole' account, it is necessary to retrace some of the broad lines of argument I have presented. I began by casting a contextual light on the filmmaking industries in Lebanon and foregrounding some of the main sociological debates filmmakers and their webs of relationships are embroiled in. I focused particularly on Lebanese cinema to give a broad sense, informed by Bourdieu (1993), of the different logics and pathways along which Lebanese 'film' has recently developed. After the watershed moment of West Beirut (Doueiri, 1999), cinematic cultural production started to 'move' again in Lebanon, streaming down three interrelated but relatively autonomous pathways: (1) popular films such as Bosta (Aractingi, 2008a) established a mass market for Lebanese cinema, drawing unprecedented box office receipts at the time. (2) As 'high-brow' cinema developed through films such as Zozo (Fares, 2005) and Falafel (Kammoun, 2008), the popular path charted by Aractingi (2008) led to a significant increase of the number of feature films produced in the country per year. Film in Lebanon was in a state of growth, particularly on the popular end of the market with television companies investing their own resources to produce cinema and reap the profits of ticket sales. (3) Against the backdrop of this degree of polarisation came Labaki's (2008) Caramel, 'internationalising' Lebanese cinema and attracting increasing foreign interest and investment in the industry in Beirut. It was against this three-laned cinematic backdrop, coupled by the usual ratings-driven orientation of Lebanese television (cf Bourdieu, 1998a) that laid the aesthetic and industrial (organisational) groundwork for a new type of visual cultural product to be disseminated from Beirut: web-series.

I showed in the introduction how over a period of three-to-four years, Beirut produced no less than four separate web-series: Shankaboot, Beirut I Love You (BILY),

Fasateen, and Valet Parking. Having provided a degree of context as to how these different web-series (and the production networks behind them) related to each other, I moved on to locating these local production networks within academic understandings of freelance film workers and cultural producers: self- exploitation, actualisation or mediation[69]? In my theoretical chapter I made my case for a relational approach to the study of film producers rooted in social network analysis, manoeuvring between different approaches and settling on Crossley's (2010a) empirical relationality that conceptualizes networks as akin to social worlds. In chapter three I discussed the methodological implications of such a relational approach, laying the terms of how I implemented a mixed-methods social network analytic methodology (MMSNA) (Crossley and Edwards' 2016). I then turned to the specificities of my own ethnography of networks of cultural production in Beirut. Here, it was important to consider the advantages and potential pitfalls of ethnographing home and friends, and I hope to have provided a convincing account of how I made use of these advantages and sidestepped the pitfalls: People I trust in, identify with and have a sense of loyalty towards accepted my situated ethnographic gaze into their lives; I hope the rigour with which I have attempted to approach my work does 'justice' to their trust. Also in chapter three, I provided a descriptive account of the overall research process, laying bare the iterative process through which out of my empirical data emerged three planes of analysis that crystallized into my substantive chapters: markets, objects and relationships. Networks of cultural production are formed and maintained through their 'interstitial' relationships with markets, the cultural products they produce and the 'internal' relationships between producers.

Contributions

In chapter four, drawing upon Potts et al.'s (2008) framework of social network markets, sensitized towards the production side of cultural production, I showed how freelance film workers in fact move between different 'industries' (as per traditional classification systems) on a project basis. People receive news of potential projects

[69] I recognise that the relationship between these debates is neither linear nor mutually exclusive. The reductive turn of phrase here is aimed at giving as brief an account of introductory discussions as possible.

from different contacts or friends, each potential project carrying with it the situated contingencies of the social ties that present these 'work opportunities' to producers. Forefronting the similarity of the production process across different cultural 'industries,' I argued that a significant portion of producers' everyday working lives revolve around managing different types of clients and the changes these differences impose on the production process. Using the network analytic notion of equivalence, I showed how the differing content in patronage ties influences the role-based structure of production networks on set, providing producers with an altogether different set of challenges to navigate on top of producing cultural objects. I concluded that the formation and maintenance of networks of cultural production in Beirut was in many cases directly related to how fellow crewmembers felt their colleagues managed these differences in clientele. Network members agentically evaluate opportunities for repeat collaboration with each other based on past experiences (how well did we handle this particular project? / how creatively stimulating was this particular project? / was the pay worth it?) and future opportunities (how feasible is it to maintain such a configuration with other clients? / to what extent do we want to collaborate with the same client again? / is the pay worth it?). This resonates with and layers our understandings of how boundaryless careers are 'crafted' (Jones 1996), how workgroups are formed (Blair 2003), and begins making the case for how social relationships 'buffer' the more erratic tendencies of filmmaking careers (Faulkner and Anderson 1987, p. 887).

Chapter four also addresses some of the more conceptual problematics facing a sociology of filmmakers. As I have shown on numerous occasions throughout the pages above, most cultural workers are hired for *parts* of the production process, be that exclusively in pre-production, production or post-production. A camera assistant, for instance, is only hired for the last few days of pre-production and the entirety of the production phases. They would have absolutely no role to play in post-production, let alone distribution. Most crewmembers I came across during my fieldwork cared very little about how or where the projects they were hired for would be disseminated - this was just *one* of the considerations on which they decided whether or not to take a job (cf Wei, 2012). Drawing upon traditional classification systems in analyses on cultural producers would therefore make little sense, imposing upon their lives a grand-sounding 'movement between industries' that in actuality is no movement at all:

shooting an ad one day and a music video the next, from the situated experience of a camera assistant, requires little transition or movement, particularly since they do not need to draw upon different contacts, producers or indeed production houses to secure those two jobs.

Potts et al.'s (2008) notion of social network markets acts as a corrective in this regard, empirically grounding the 'markets' in which cultural producers operate in their social networks as opposed to altogether different industries. This can indeed have important implications for future research aiming to gain a closer understanding of the everyday lives of cultural producers. The framework is at least more sensitised and complementary to the situated experience of the research population. Starting from situated experience could also lead to the iterative and more grounded understanding of the meaning filmmakers give to their own lives (Gill and Pratt, 2008). Bechky (2006), for instance, discusses differences between unionised and non-unionised crewmembers in Hollywood. Unionised workers, unsurprisingly, receive higher fees for their work. Adopting this notion of social network markets separates the wood from the trees in this regard by doing away with visible but benign social structures around cultural workers (i.e. consumption-based classification systems) and instead 'clearing' the landscape towards the identification of invisible but significant social structures (such as unionization, hierarchies of potential clients, hierarchies of aesthetic): understanding the working preferences of filmmakers would be an intellectually productive endeavour. Aside from providing an indication as to how much or how little crewmembers are likely to get paid (they get paid most in ads), consumption-based classification systems add little value to studies aiming to understand the production side of cultural production. Pivoting around the notion of social network markets in this context allows to bring to the fore some of the more micro-level but still significant influence of clients.

Having shed some light on the 'work' that networks of cultural production do, I turned to the outcomes of these project-based commissions: the cultural objects themselves. Partly informed by DeNora's (1986) interactionist, social constructivist approach (that meaning is socially constructed in interaction with cultural objects) and theories of mediation (Hennion, 2002, 2015), I used a more longitudinal approach by drawing upon two-mode networks that relate cultural objects to the people that produced them. I investigated how films (objects) reciprocally produce their producers. I

specifically referred to how people's consumption of past projects, and the meaning attached to this consumption (e.g. I liked it / I didn't like it, for instance) relationally mediates the production of the producer of the object (e.g. I liked this film → the scriptwriter is very good). Turning my attention to more 'junior' network members, I showed how – over time – the projects they were involved in provided pathways towards seniority and participated[70], as opposed to conduced or constrained, in the "crafting" (Jones, 1996, p. 63) of their filmmaking careers. The consumption of cultural objects by the potential future colleagues of their producers, I argued, mediates how these potential colleagues construct the producer of the cultural object they have just consumed. This process provides significant opportunities and constraints to the pathways through which the careers of producers progress, and contributes with more texture to Negus (1997) circuits of cultural production. It also contributes to current normatively-outlined debates on what filmmakers make of their uncertain, project-based careers. Placing my own research in dialogue with Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2010) and Strandvad (2010), I attempted to provide a situated empirical account of the inherent instability of filmmaking careers. My argument here, informed by the mediating role of objects, was that these cultural objects mediate and provide pathways for career stability over time, affording more senior filmmakers a greater agency to configure their working lives differently once they reach a certain level of seniority (cf Platman 2004; 2002).

This chapter contributes by cautiously interrogating and problematising cultural sociology's reticence to – or difficulty in - including objects in analyses. I have attempted to demonstrate Born's (2010, p. 192) argument that discounting cultural products discounts the agency of cultural producers, drawing upon Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) conception of agency as a temporally-embedded process of social engagement. Our actions are oriented towards the future as well as the past and present, and discounting cultural objects from our analyses hinders us from locating both the past and future orientations of agency. Gilles' '*sinecure*' configuration of working life comes to mind here: "I do a few ads once every few months to make the money I need to make and then I go back to doing my own thing." It is amply clear through this statement that his occasional work on ads affords him the agency of pursuing more creatively stimulating paths in everyday life. But perhaps what best

[70] Since the pathways they provided were not always conducive to career progression.

illustrates the attempted contribution of my chapter on objects is a conversation I had long before this doctoral research project on the set of an ad, with an assistant director who himself – like Gilles – is currently attempting to move towards directing jobs. I asked him what a focus puller was. "The person who 'pulls' the focus ring while the camera is moving, so as to maintain the focus on the subject of the shot," he answered. My immediate reaction was one of confusion, why would anyone want to be a focus puller? My confusion was based on me finding it absurd that people would get so close to operating the camera, only to settle for operating the focus ring of the camera instead of composing frames. "Well that's the thing," the assistant director replied, "usually people get into it as a route towards becoming the camera operator, but then sometimes they are so good at it that they just get stuck in there." His words resonate with the oft-referenced worries my own participants had of "being stuck in ads." In both cases, one's relationship to the evolving cultural product constrained agency by preventing them from becoming camera operators or from getting out of the ad world and into more creatively stimulating pastures. Agency, turns out, *is* inherently relational.

While Born's (2010) critique of cultural sociology refers particularly to works of art, Strandvad (2012, 2010) calls for a broader move towards the socio-material or socio-technical in the sociology of cultural production. Witnessing two best friends fawning over a convoluted camera rig on a professional film set makes it extremely difficult to disagree with her. People do genuinely seem to derive pleasure from interacting with technology, and the refusal of traditional sociological approaches to engage with the socio-material seems to increasingly constrain explanations of these rather under-illuminated corners of the social world. Having discussed call sheets first in chapter two, I returned to them as illustrative guides in chapter five. One of the biggest challenges in the making of the Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift (Lin, 2006), to illustrate, was the different 'working cultures' that American and Japanese crewmembers had. Japanese crewmembers would stick to the call sheet at all costs, while American crewmembers would use the call sheet as a broad reference for how the day was meant to go. Such disconnects further call into question not only how objects (call sheets) shape our own professional experiences but also mediate our relationships with colleagues and thereby play an active role in the production process.

Finally, in chapter six, I considered some of the properties emergent out of the cyclical, repeat collaboration of network members on a variety of projects together over a number of years. Drawing upon the notion of multiplexity, I argued that the professional relationships that first tied crewmembers together develop more social and altruistic properties over time, if for no other reason than the amount of time these people spend together during down-time on set. Filmmakers have very particular opinions of themselves and of each other, ranging from virtually unconditional love and support to downright shocking disrespect[71]. Ultimately, though, it is in their interest to cooperate. As relationships develop alongside professional ties, individual self-narratives come to increasingly incorporate one's colleagues. At the level of the production network as a whole, shared narratives emerge out of the collaboration of the whole network on a particular project. Taking stock of the chapter previous, I argued that these shared narratives are mediated by the non-human objects crewmembers interact with – I showed how call sheets, for example, legitimate certain aspects of these emergent shared narratives and exclude others. But over time, these shared narratives are given new relational meaning and come to encompass a broader range of everyday practices. I showed, for instance, how rolling with particular papers in a particular way was imbued with network-specific meaning. I also showed how relations of apprenticeship on set 'spilled over' into social and political projects off it (Acord and Denora 2008, p. 230). Finally, I turned towards the complex off-set relationships that emerged out of these repeat on-set collaborations among various network members. Particularly, skewing Kadushin's (1995) use of the anthropological concept of moieties, I provided an account of the complex competitive but also cooperative social relationships that developed among senior network members, and how these influenced the lives of more junior network members. I also showed how the shared narratives emergent out of the network were retained to varying degrees by junior members on their path to seniority.

I believe it is only in aggregation with chapter six that the main arguments of this thesis take their final shape. Here I focused on the role of personal relationships between network members, analysing some of the shared narratives emergent out of the whole network and consequently broadly touching upon its emergent 'worldness'. Some aspects of these shared narrative were legitimated in interaction with objects

[71] I once bore witness to the utterance of "my [excrement] is better than her work".

such as call sheets and rolling papers. Indeed the stories and meanings that were attached to these objects resided in the content of the tie between human and portable object. Network-level meaning is imbued into the dyadic relationships (to persons *and* objects like rolling paper). But the *portability* of these people and objects, be they films, rolling papers or the camera assistant one hangs out with off-set, carries this meaning with it to other social contexts. It is therefore precisely this *portability of meaning* that I believe explains, for instance, my own insistence to smoke exclusively with Papier Damas in Edinburgh and my friends' insistence to do so in more traditional family settings where the act itself can be contentious (older generations tend to associate Papier Damas with drug addiction). Our interaction with the rolling paper to smoke, then, became imbued with further social and political meaning.

People's interactions with each other gradually began to take on multiplex properties: gaining not only economic but also social meaning. Implicit here are two contributions to debates in the sociology of cultural production, the second of which perhaps articulates the overall attempted contribution of this thesis. The first is a reminder of the importance, and indeed omnipotence, of multiplexity in the social world. The network notions of embeddedness (Granovetter, 2005) and multiplexity (Kapferer, 1969) ought to serve at least as reminders of the inherent complexity of social relationships and act as a safeguard against simplistic explanations. To illustrate, I wish to return to my critique of Becker's (Becker and Pessin 2006, p. 280) reference to "dissident intellectual movements" in chapter two. Specifically, I argued that the ease with which Becker invokes "dissident intellectual movements" is deceptive of the invisible weight of power structures on people. I believe the notion of multiplexity could nuance and even prevent such privileged straw man arguments, by asking us to look for more complex salient logics in how we relate to the things and people around us. A simple such recalibration would have led to the cognizance that there are probably some very significant reasons why people don't just dissent against regimes – democratic or totalitarian.

Crossley and Edwards (2016, 4.2) argue that network analyses are necessarily case studies and cannot make any "mathematical" claims to generalisability. So how might this particular case contribute to our understanding of 'other' cases? It suggests, for instance, that networks of cultural production, defined broadly as SPWGs, repeat collaborations or indeed more gated professional networks, cultivate personal as well

as professional relationships, neither of which have categorical primacy alone in deciding courses of action. This suggestion calls for a greater consideration of the notion of embeddedness in academic approaches to cultural production, and might point towards explanations for why filmmakers or cultural workers often choose as life partners people working in similar industries. It might also allow for more informed approaches to when, where and how a particular 'movement' or 'world' might have begun (cf Crossley, 2009; Crossley et al., 2012). The notion of social network markets, when considered in aggregation with the above, might also contribute to more nuanced understandings of how 'artists' are 'selected' by clients for particular projects, nuancing supply-and-demand focussed approaches with a greater appreciation for situated interactional affinities between people, their aesthetic subjectivities and tastes. This dissertation should also add momentum to growing yet still somewhat marginalised socio-material approaches to cultural production, currently championed in the sociology of film by Strandvad (2012; 2010). Objective social processes and subjective experiences are indeed mediated by objects, be they call sheets, films or rolling papers, and this renders Zolbger's (1990) call to arms on middle-level societal structures yet more complex than initially thought. While this dissertation stops short of forcing the argument, it just might be the case that, following on from Albertsen and Diken (2004), networks do indeed play this mediating role between subjective experience and objective social processes. In other words, status creation becomes a relational, situated and subjective process. The versatility of networks in laying bare the multiple translations and social constructions of meaning with people *and* objects thus allows for a surgical dissection of how subjective socialities produce objective outcomes.

Casting Nets, Framing Films

As I constructed the three analytic chapters that have come to form the substantive backbone of this thesis, my reflections kept pointing me towards a sea-based metaphor. I owe this perhaps to a certain 'God Moment' I experienced with the

network under study while shooting Fasateen[72] in the summer of 2012. We were crammed into a tight open space on the edge of a small pier in Beirut: docked fishing boats behind us, the sea in front, and curious people above us on the corniche. We were shooting a sombre scene, a depressed character reflecting upon her life in front of the sun setting into the Mediterranean. The odd small fishing boat kept passing by, the fisherman on which looked inquisitively upon the dozen-odd people crammed into this tight space holding their breaths every time the assistant director announced "silence on set." Later, I asked some of the fishermen on the pier whether they go out fishing together on different boats. Their response painted in my mind the image of this metaphor: I imagined a dark sea (they preferred fishing at dawn), faintly lit at different points by the weak lamps on these boats. The advantage of fishing in unison, the fishermen told me, was that it would decrease the open space fish could swim into and increase the netted space they wanted them to swim towards.

As I demonstrated in chapter five, after Remie and I finished the Tayyeb photoshoot we agreed to formalise our arrangement. Each of us, then, in our own everyday lives away from each other, would be on the lookout for such opportunities in food photography. Each of us on a separate fishing boat, casting a net in such a way as to catch as many fish of a particular type as possible. This 'type' of fish was food photography – a fish we had rather unintentionally caught but seemed to be able to cook and sell rather well[73]. When Denise and Muriel visited our Tayyeb set, they seemed to be impressed with how well we were conducting the photoshoot. When they saw our final photographs, they seemed even more impressed. This led them to also keep 'an open eye out' for such opportunities for us. Our work having gained their specialist approval and respect, then, Denise and Muriel also pushed out their fishing boats, casting their own nets for the 'fish' Remie and I decided to try and 'catch'. In the overall context of this thesis, the Tayyeb experience was a minute detail, but one that I believe allows to illustrate the broader dynamics at play.

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[72] A project over which my relationship with Batoota Films owner Katia, who I considered (and still do) a mentor, came under significant strain. This is illustrative of the argument that as projects come and go, so do relationships ebb and flow.

[73] The metaphor of cooking and selling is apt here: production networks are commissioned on the *idea* of a cultural product (the raw fish). They transform and materialise that idea with the buyer, (they 'cook' the fish) and then sell it (the final payment happens after the delivery of the object).

With each successful passing project ('successful' being a contingent word here that relates to what producers of the project make of their situated experience of successful production, but also to the mobilisation of subjectivities (Farrugia et al., 2017)), fellow crewmembers push out their fishing boats together, casting their nets for the same collaborative purpose. This, I believe is the main contribution of chapter four. Chapter five adds to the story by arguing that when potential colleagues or brokers consume these successful projects, they socially construct meaning into – and in interaction with – the project. Reductively put, if they like the project they have just consumed, this mediates the consumers' production of the producer as 'able' and 'worthy of respect'. And with each passing successful project, this respect grows, and as this respect grows, these consumers begin pushing out their own boats, casting their own nets to catch the fish producers of said project want to be catching. But as the porosity of networks and indeed fish nets themselves inform us, this is not a mutually exclusive process: our fishing boats can cast more than one type of net and can catch more than one type of fish. It makes intuitive sense, however, that well-reputed, well-respected senior Muriel would be able to cast a wider net than I would, and the likelihood of her informing me of potential new projects is higher than me informing her. Her structural position in the social network market, the sea, allows her to cast a wider net than I. Power comes to mind here: as Muriel and I (hypothetically) cast our nets in search of fish for each other, there is an underlying relationship of apprenticeship – of her providing me with access to the resources she can access (cf Antcliff et al., 2007). Chapter six, I believe, delves deeper into the textured material the nets that we cast for each other are made of.

The freelance, project-based organization of these social network markets leads different cultural producers – fisherpeople – to different depths of the sea. Farah, for instance, increasingly specialized in web-series and documentaries, or in other words a particular fishing site. Perhaps this is where my thesis finally approaches a Bourdieusian (1998b; 1993) epistemic relationality: as different network members chart their own individual (but networked) paths of specialisation, these specialisations in particular domains increase or decrease the epistemic (professional) distance between network members. Farah in web-series, Muriel in Home of CineJam, Katia in documentaries, Karim in ads to name a few. These can all be thought of as different structural positions in different specialised networks (different parts of the sea) that

make up the networks of networks (the sea) that is the social network markets cultural producers (fisherpeople) operate in. But while the professional distance between network members increases or decreases as a function of individuals' specialisations, the social relationships that tie network members together might not – in fact the increase or decrease of social distances follows altogether different set of off-set logics. And so as different network members go into different parts of the sea, looking for different types of fish, the nets cast by these fisherpeople for themselves and for each other grow in surface area, their strength determined by the underlying social relationships that still tie them together and reinforced by the occasional professional relationships that are re-activated on a project basis.

In all of this, debates on self-exploitation (or not) seem rather distracted to me. While I feel that Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2010) orientation towards social policy hinders them from adequately incorporating 'fun' and 'pleasure' into their accounts of the complicated freedoms of cultural producers, I agree with Hesmondhalgh's (2010) call for prioritisation and political pragmatism here. It is clear to me that in the case of filmmakers at least, there are more urgent issues of exploitation than the free labour required of them. Menger (1999) and Jones (1996) have suggested artists be thought of as small firms, as small fishing boats facing the tides of the sea on their own. It is true that the only 'support' these people have in the face of changing seas is the support they give each other (be that through professional associations or unions in the West, or not much more than *literally* each other in Beirut). It is also true that the emancipatory potential of this form of collegial support is continuously undermined by market demand (tides of the sea). This is something that, as academics, we mustn't find difficult to understand: scholars know all too well what is 'wrong with the system,' but they are simultaneously all too busy and overworked to achieve more than occasional wins in battles. But while academics are protected by pensions, institutions and long-term contracts, filmmakers only have each other with all the volatile, contingent variety that relationships with each other carry as baggage. To the sea (the 'industry' or market), their utility as fisherpeople is only as good as the last fish they have caught – and the sea requires them to catch plenty of fish quickly, lest it push them back ashore. The age-old maxim of 'you're only as good as your last job' certainly retains its merit, and perhaps should be further qualified by 'once you're out, it's really hard to get back in.' These are people whose job it is to continually produce 'new,'

'unique' aesthetic images (thus the rich academic literature on creativity), in a sense their value is their repeated, cyclical innovation rooted in the mobilisation of others' subjectivities. They have to be continuously endowed and re-endowed with the label of 'artist' from their social worlds. The danger here is thus clear: their livelihoods depend almost entirely on subjectivities – volatile and ever-changing as they are. To an extent, this validates Santagata's (2010) Marxist-inspired notion of "the culture factory" that resembles the autonomist Marxist notion of the social factory (Tronti, 1966).

Humility: Tenuous, Frozen, Knowledge

Since completing my fieldwork, and throughout the writing process, I have returned to Beirut on a number of occasions. While my data collection had a definitive end point, the lives of my friends and research participants kept moving forward. In conversations with them, and in my own observations of how the city has changed since the first half of 2015, I have continually searched for complexities that have eluded my data collection and analysis. And as I write the concluding paragraphs of my thesis I reflect upon two broad themes I believe I have been a bit short-sighted towards: gender and life trajectories. While these are necessarily interrelated, I will attempt to keep my discussion of them as bounded as possible: I would like to draw upon the short-sightedness of my thesis towards the former to make a point about the tenuousness of knowledge, drawing upon the work of Wanda Pillow (2003), and the latter towards a reflection on methodology. Gender, to be sure, was something I was mindful of from the fieldwork phase of my doctoral research. I have observed, for instance, the differential societal pressure that women are subjected to after the age of 25 to 'settle down,' 'get married' or 'make us proud.' Men also face these pressures, to be sure, but patriarchy allows us to deflect them. "But what about my career?" or "I haven't met the right one" or even "Find me someone!" are all scripts that rely upon the construction of a macho breadwinner about to go on a supermarket trip for life partners. Throughout the thesis I have referenced the 'weight' of researching my friends ("my people"), an issue I engaged with in depth in chapter three by highlighting the 'duality' of positionality in relation to research participants *but also*, drawing upon Bourdieu's (2003) participant objectivation. Just as this piece of text is a means to earn a PhD in Sociology, it is also a piece to 'do justice' to the trust my participants

demonstrated in allowing me into their lives. My short-sightedness in relation to gender is therefore an important issue to consider, if for no other reason than the threat it poses to the trust my participants gave me.

The notion of reflexivity is helpful in this regard. Davies (2012, p. 4 in Pillow 2003, p. 178) defines reflexivity as the ways in which the outcome of research is affected by the people involved in it and the process of doing it. Gender is certainly one area in which this dissertation is a product of my situatedness in the social world of my participants (and the baggage that comes with it). The shortcomings of my situatedness as a researcher in relation to gender - and indeed my 'reflexive reflections' on the issue - are precisely the site at which power differentials of researcher/researched can be acted upon: "neither a deliberate obfuscation nor the desire for clarity and accessibility is innocent," Pillow (2003, p. 192) reminds us with reference to St. Pierre (1997, p. 186), arguing that implicit in either of these is an imposition of a "singular, knowable, and fixable" subjecthood onto my participants (Pillow 2003, p. 182). Her notion of uncomfortable reflexivity, "a reflexivity that seeks to know while at the same time situates this knowledge as tenuous," (*ibid*, p. 188) allows me to clearly state that I neither have nor want this power of my people. A conversation with a participant towards the latter, reflective stages of my time in the field, illustrates the notion. A friend and I were discussing sexuality, particularly the internal struggles of being a lesbian but also wanting to raise children: "I think to myself, I'd like to have children, but I don't want to be with a man. So I think, *can* I actually have children *without* being a man?" she wondered in reference to something Lebanese society at large would consider unthinkable. Later that day I found a life lesson in a comment she made about my research: "No matter how much you study someone, or you think you know someone, you will never know what they think about right before they sleep and what they think about when they wake up." My dissertation is an explanatory account of *some*, by no means all, of the complexity of the social world and lives of my participants.

I kept returning to Beirut every few months or so, and on each return I kept visiting the building for morning or afternoon coffee with its occupants. All the participants of my research have grown over the period of my doctoral project, even my own hair has turned grey; this was indeed one of the things I looked forward to upon frequent returns to Beirut: how have people changed? How has the city changed? But it was

my family and the occupants of this specific building that I would always observe with a hint of nervousness. Specifically, I have noticed one particularly close friend and mentor of mine age over these past few years, and I wonder if I will ever be able to explain the increasing exhaustion underlying her face. Around the world film industries are certainly not exempt from patriarchy (see Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2012, 2011 for UK-specific findings) and the Lebanese one is no different. This is necessarily one of the aspects in which my ethnographic gaze is, at best, short-sighted. Crossley and Edwards' (2016, 2.7) realist ontology corroborates this stance: "Social worlds outstrip the sociological gaze. As such, there is always more to them than a researcher can hope to capture."

A second, more nuanced theme has been that of life trajectories. I conducted my fieldwork in 2015 and I submit my thesis two years and eleven months later. While I am still in close contact with the majority of research participants in this thesis, there are those with whom I have lost touch, who have now got married, moved to different countries and established extremely successful careers. I wonder if, two years on, they would still find themselves in agreement with the broad contours of the arguments I make here, not just those that I make in relation to them but also the overarching arguments of this thesis. Would they agree that their films produced them just as much as they produced their films? Why, or why not? But more importantly, the different life chapters they now find themselves in makes me wonder whether there was anything 'real' about my own analysis. Was 'God Moments' really a meaningful thing for them or was it just a performance en route to more important life goals? Nowadays I notice, for instance, an altogether more apprehensive approach to the loss of a potential project. In 2015, I noted how the loss of a potential project was the topic of supportive, productive conversation in which friends could comfort each other. During more recent visits to Beirut I have had the sense that such to-be-expected losses of potential projects have become more and more stressful, their imminent danger almost seeming closer. Farrugia et al. (2017) provide opportunities to reflect upon this as a transition out of youth and into adulthood. Is this because everyone has grown up by a couple of years? Is it because of the yet-again unstable political climate in the country? Is it an intersection of growing up by a couple of years and gender? This certainly calls into question the significance of safety nets, be they in the form of unions or state-organised pensions, both non-existent in Beirut, and sheds

light on some of the pressing issues of power I alluded to earlier in this concluding chapter (cf Brand, 2015).

Reflecting upon this reinforces Coffey's (1999, p. 89) insistence that "In the field' and then 'coming back from the field' are still real categories and temporal boundaries." It also resonates with Naples' (1996, p. 83)assertion on the insider/outsider distinction: ""*Outsiderness" and "insiderness"* are not fixed or static positions, rather they are ever-shifting and permeable social locations." There is a tension emerging here between movement and stasis: between the temporal movement of boundaries of in-the-field and outside-the-field, the shifting and permeable social locations of insider/outsider and the stasis of this text emergent out of movement. Crossley (2010a, p. 128) alludes to this in his discussion of agency:

> *"Sociologists, as members of the social world they analyse, know it to be dynamic and in-process, historically. Static snapshots of structure are important but only ever part of the story, a part which must be treated with caution precisely because it abstracts from praxis (interaction) and brackets out time, freezing the social world in a moment."*

Looking Ahead and Beyond

Returning for one last time to Zolberg's (1990) critique, perhaps my thesis implicitly and cautiously suggests that maybe an empirical relational framework grounded in social network analysis could lead us in productive directions. While Born (2010) and object-oriented ontologists such as Hennion (2015) have found in Zolberg (1990) a sensible ally for their own project of not reducing art objects to mere afterthoughts and byproducts in sociological analysis, implicit in her argument is a veiled critique of sociologists' exclusion of culture in processes of art creation from relevance in the discipline. She argues "the sociologist is more interested in the symbolic use of art, rather than the work itself," (Zolberg 1990, pp. 55-56) before elaborating on the problematic complexity of focusing on the work of art itself: "this brings the scholar to the brink of making value judgements about the subject and, consequently, showing bias" (Zolberg 1990: 212). It is productive, when reflecting upon Zolberg's (1990) work, to be informed by some subsequent sociological studies of art that attempt to address these valid criticisms, and indeed perhaps even by some sociological work

preceding Zolberg's (1990) seminal reflection on the sociology of the arts. In terms of precedents, Becker's (1974)[74] work on art as collective action encourages us to think of "art" as a process, or the final iteration of a collective social process and thus potentially opens up the possibility of analysing the cultural aspects of this process of art creation.

In academic attempts to answer this particular question of middle level social structures, there is a tacit consensus on how one can approach this project. Chronologically, Zolberg (1990, pp. 212 - 213) advocated for a reflexive approach "by which scholars undertake constant self-examination, perusing their choice of subject, formulation of questions, procedures, and findings". Her statement on the role, and indeed power, of the sociologist in searching for and articulating such elusive middle level structures bears a striking resemblance to Crossley's (2015, p. 483) previously cited quote that the role of academics is not to decide what playing the guitar entails, and who can and cannot play the guitar, rather to articulate how actors define guitar playing. They are both arriving at the same destination: that our job is to set out the contours of these middle level social structures (the structures, in Crossley's terms, that deem a particular way of playing the guitar skilful or not) as defined by those judging whether someone can indeed play the guitar or not. For Acord and DeNora (2008, p. 224) this necessitates understanding what Wuthnow and Witten (1988) dubbed "implicit culture", defined as "a more abstract feature of social life that, like tacit knowledge, provides the framework for social action." The authors' reflections on how to approach and texture this implicit culture (Acord and DeNora 2008), these middle level social structures (Zolberg 1990), or the conventions according to which one can be deemed as knowing how to play the guitar (Crossley 2015), are complementary: having discussed how Zolberg (1990) and Crossley (2015) are in agreement over the role of the researcher in this regard, I note how Acord and DeNora (2008, p. 233) refer to Atkinson (2006) and set out a similar job description for the researcher:

[74] Although it should be noted that Zolberg (1990) might well have disagreed with my statement here: She characterises Becker and symbolic interactionists as those who take the art work as a given (object), while structuralists such as Bourdieu see it as a process.

"The ethnographer does not have to be a critic or director but does have to be interested in the local aesthetics that inform the production of the performance. The sociologist must not interpret actions using her or his presumptions of culture (established representations, static meanings, etc.) as resources but, instead, needs to look at how actors themselves make links and produce cultural significance in everyday life, to illuminate their resources as they locate them."

As an 'insider' to the network of film production this thesis is concerned with, I have attempted throughout this thesis to arrive at exactly these middle level social structures, these conventions by which the network - through its mutliplex ties and their emergent properties - has produced by reflexively consuming the cultural symbols in the cultural objects they themselves have produced within the context of social network markets. In doing so I have arrived at some potential answers in the form of emergent narratives such as God Moments and aesthetics such as 'National Produce' that have necessarily been translated from the set to social and political projects in the everyday lives of network members. But to what extent can these be considered to those middle level social structures that Zolberg (1990) identified as an academic project and Crossley (2015; 2010b), Acord and DeNora (2008) and others cited throughout this thesis attempted to articulate? In his critique of network analyses of culture, Puetz (2015, p. 440) states, "Analyses causally privileged networks' effects on culture a priori without seriously considering culture's reciprocal influence on network formation." His criticism is one in agreement with Zolberg's (1990) own argument that the sociology of art unfairly discounts the work of art on its producers, and with Pinney's (2004, p. 8) own call, cited in Rose (2016, p. 21) for us sociologists to look not at *how* art objects *look* but *what* they *do*. The final question, relating yet again to a problem identified by Zolberg (1990, p. 70) turns to the limitations imposed by our ethnographic methods:

"Ethnographic methods are of value to sociologists especially for studying small groups or subcultures within complex societies. The varied micro-analytic modes of study to which they have led to some extent have remedied the overly scientistic mode of mainstream sociology. But these methods and orientations have obvious limitations which become apparent in large, heterogeneous, complexly structured societies, surely the case of the large, varied civilizations of Asia and Africa."

This is perhaps where after 80,000 words of agreement, this thesis breaks with Zolberg (1990). Do the complexities of large and varied societies and civilizations not share any processual parallels or similarities that help further focus our understandings of broader universalisms? Do the limitations of ethnographic, qualitative methods necessarily render such analyses redundant? Or do they - in illuminating emergent processes, middle level social structures, conventions and worlds-in-process - lay bare sociology's ongoing search for, and its inability to yet find, value-free explanations to how subjectivities, situated experience, and the 'goings on' of culture-in-context, influence wider social process and the human condition?

Perhaps further empirical relational sociological studies – grounded in social network analysis and informed by ethnographic understandings – of cultural production from other traditionally excluded contexts can help illuminate potential forward paths.

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